

Ryuugoroshi no Sugosuhibi

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Chapter 28: Kidnapped by the Dragon, Thrown away by the Dragon

Within the dark and dense forest, a lone man stood. As the beasts of the forest slept in this pitch black night, covered in a black cloak, the man quietly travelled inconspicuously. Even the slightest noise and movement could not escape this man's attention. It was as if the man was on the run from something.

Just beyond the trees was the scent of the ocean and the low sounds of the waves on the coast. At one point, the consistent sound of the waves was paused for a moment. Believing it to be a simple shift of the tide, the man resumed his travel. However, when the sound of something falling into the sands was heard, he stopped.

He focused his gaze towards the source of the sound. Blocked by the shrubberies, he was unable to get a clear image of what fell onto the beach.

He thought for a moment before deciding to investigate and changed his destination to the beach.

"What in the world..."(???)

The quiet man unintentionally leaked his voice. In the man's eye was a humanoid with its head stuck in the sand, scrambling to get free. Seeing such a scene for the first time, he couldn't hold in his voice.

"I guess I'll pull it out first. It's probably the right thing to do, right?"(???)

The man grabbed the buried person's legs and pulled. In response to the man's pulling, the buried individual started to push out from the sand as well.

Thanks to the two's efforts, a sand covered young man popped out of the beach.

"Phew, I'm saved"(???)

The young man, in a moment of relief, fell onto his rear end in joy. Once he caught his breath, the young man shifted his gaze towards his savior.

"I'm not sure who you are, but thank you for saving me"(???)

"You're welcome. Would you mind telling me how you fell into such a situation?"(???)

The man carefully examined the young man as he asked.

He dressed like a traveler, but his lack of baggage made it difficult to tell why he was in such a situation.

"Sure, I have a few things I want to know too. I guess I should introduce myself first. My name is Kousuke, I'm a traveler that was on his way back to the Sebushik continent"(Kousuke)

In Kousuke's eyes, the man before him looked older so he tried to sound as respectful as possible.

"I am....."(???)

That was when the man suddenly went silent. After short hesitation the man opened his mouth.

"I'm Scheidt. I was on my way to Mt. Mubrant. When I heard a loud sound coming from the beach, I ended up finding you at the source"(Scheidt)

"Mt. Mubrant? Where exactly are we right now?"(Kousuke)

"You don't know? We're in the Kingdom of Karbaret, a part of the Ezenbia continent"(Scheidt)

"Ezenbia..... Just south of Kalhode right?"(Kousuke)

"That's it. Perhaps you were traveling from Kalhode?"(Scheidt)

Kousuke nodded.

Although Kousuke said he was heading back to Sebushik, seeing him here in Ezenbia made Scheidt wonder if Kousuke had a terrible sense of direction.

Since talking on the beach was a bit cold, the two discussed their plans as they walked.

Kousuke continued to recall and explained how he arrived here.

When Kousuke's group left the port city in Kalhode, they didn't encounter any

storms or typhoons and sailed smoothly.

It was a medium-sized passenger ship, similar to the caravel ship of his world. Including themselves, the entire ship held around 60 passengers. The only incident that he could recall on the ship was that Viare became seasick since it was rocking quite a bit.

On the 4th day of the voyage, Kousuke, who had nothing to do, decided to sunbathe and nap on the deck.

"Oh Viare, this is where you were"(Kousuke)

"I feel a lot better outside feeling the breeze than being cooped up in the room"(Viare)

Ever since she got over her seasickness, Viare has been in a good mood.

"I guess the motion sickness medicine worked"(Kousuke)

The ship had some medicine for motion sickness on board for the passenger, for a price though. When Alice remembered about the medicine, she bought some for Viare from the sailors.

"I'm pretty sure it wouldn't be rocking so much if it was a larger ship"
(Kousuke)

Kousuke was reminded about his experience on a large ferry that barely rocked.

"Really? Well, this is my first time on a ship so I really don't know much about them. Oh, that reminds me, why is Kousuke-san here on the deck?"(Viare)

"I'm a bit bored so I figured I'll sunbathe a bit while napping"(Kousuke)

"That sounds like a wonderful idea, the weather's really nice too"(Viare)

It was probably for the sailors, but there were some seats on the deck to lay on. Since they weren't occupied at the moment, it wouldn't hurt anyone for the two to use them, they thought.

After informing the deck sweeping sailor, Kousuke went back to the seats. Viare probably wanted to take a nap too as she followed Kousuke.

Taking a seat, as he closed his eyes, a loud, sudden voice was heard from

overhead.

Standing in the crow's nest, a sailor was shouting for attention as he found something unusual nearby.

"Did he just say it's a Sea Dragon?"(Kousuke)

"I heard that as well"(Viare)

The two stood up from the seats and headed towards the edge of the deck where everyone gathered.

The two shifted their gaze towards the direction the crowd was pointing and saw a gigantic serpentine-like creature in the water. Despite how far away it was, its enormity could not be hidden. Kousuke rubbed his eyes, but seeing no change in the creature's size confirmed that his eyes were not playing tricks on him.

Somebody in the crowd said that it was the Seigairyuu, the Blue Ocean Dragon. Certainly, the creature before them was covered in blue scales. **【TL: The kana used was 青海竜, literally Blue Ocean Dragon. 青海竜 can be read in various ways, Seigairyuu just sounded the best – “Say-guy-loo” is the closest pronunciation】**

"Shouldn't we be avoiding or escaping from this?"(Kousuke)

They're making quite the scene, but none of the sailors or passengers seem to be afraid of the incoming dragon. This made Kousuke a bit confused.

After confirming with a nearby sailor, Sea Dragons avoid getting too close to ships as long as they are not threatened, apparently. These sailors probably experienced this situation many times before. **【TL: Kou-chan, you're a Dragonslayer.. You're a threat】**

"It's my first time seeing another dragon besides the Black Dragon"(Viare)

Viare and the rest of the Preal Kingdom's population have seen dragons fly over their heads a few times. Upon seeing them, they would shudder in fear and pray that the dragons would not assault them. So even though the dragon before her is not the tyrannical black dragon, her deeply rooted sense of fear could not be suppressed.

"It's also my first time, seeing a live one that is"(Kousuke)

Since the opportunity presented itself, the two decided to observe the Sea Dragon a bit more. It was still a fearful experience for Viare, but for the first time curiosity was the larger reason.

"What the?"(Kousuke)

Kousuke tilted his head. An unusual change in the Sea Dragon's movement caught Kousuke's eyes.

Its head suddenly shifted towards the boat and began heading towards them.

"What's the matter?"(Viare)

"The Sea Dragon's movement....."(Kousuke)

"Movement? Ah, is it coming here?"(Viare)

Viare also noticed the dragon's size was visibly getting larger and guessed that it was approaching them.

"It.. It wasn't threatened or attacked right? Why is it coming here!?"(Viare)

Viare asked in a trembling voice, but Kousuke remained silent as he didn't know either.

When the sailors noticed the dragon's movements, unrest started to spread.

Something of that size will create large waves and may capsize the ship if it's too close.

As unrest spread, various voices of concern were getting louder and louder. A certain person ran to the captain to inform him of the situation, another tried to adjust the sails to create some distance, and another ran back and forth in confusion.

Noticing the sudden disturbance on the deck, Alice and the rest of the guests came over to find out what was going on.

"The source of this disturbance is that, isn't it"(Alice)

While maintaining her gaze on the approaching Sea Dragon, Alice spoke with confidence.

Kousuke nodded in agreement.

"It is"(Kousuke)

"Was someone idiotic enough to assault it?"(Alice)

"No, no one did such a thing. I wonder why it's coming towards us?"(Kousuke)

"What's with this situation... We can't use flight magic to shore from here since it's too far. Is there enough time to prepare a teleportation circle?"(Alice)

Having experienced the might of a dragon with her own body in the past, Alice was inclined towards escaping. Since it's too late, she dare not fight against one. It was suicidal to do so without any preparations. Her battle with the Black Dragon was with sufficient preparations, but she did not win and barely escaped.

"How can you two be so calm!?"(Viare)

Viare was shocked hearing the two's leisurely conversation in this situation.

"Because it can't be helped?"(Kousuke)

"Something like that. If necessary, I was planning on escaping into the air with flight magic"(Alice)

Alice felt that even if she attempted to block the Sea Dragon with her most powerful shield magic it would be useless in front of the dragon's charge. The two understood this instinctively. The only viable plan for the two was to grab Viare and escape into the air. However, neither of the two thought of what to do afterwards.

The originally 1km away Sea Dragon was now 500m, no 300m away. As it got closer, the waves it produced intensified and the ship began to sway heavily.

"Whoa"(Kousuke)

Kousuke grabbed the hands of Viare and Alice as they almost fell. In this situation, Kousuke was the only one maintaining his balance perfectly. **【TL: Cheater...】**

The approaching Sea Dragon slowed down and came to a complete stop around 50m away from the ship. In return, the waves stopped and the ship

regained its balance.

"Quite a big one"(Kousuke) (ㄟㄥ)

Letting the two go, Kousuke commented while staring at the Sea Dragon, who was larger than the ship. Including the submerged portion of it, this dragon was definitely larger than the Black Dragon. Permeating an aura of invincibility, it can be instantly understood why lesser beings would normally cower or faint when near it.

The rest on the ship were silently staring in awe and trepidation at the experience of seeing a Sea Dragon so close. The only ones unshaken were Kousuke and Alice.

The crowded deck was silent with no sense of disorder, primarily attributed to the lack of hostility coming from the Sea Dragon.

Shifting its gaze from person to person, the Sea Dragon's eyes stopped firmly onto Kousuke.

"What's this?"(Kousuke)

By some unknown force, Kousuke felt his body being pulled. And the force increased rapidly. Involuntarily, he was slowly getting dragged towards to the edge of the deck. No matter how hard he tried to stand his ground, he couldn't stop. Coming to their senses, Viare and Alice tried to drag him back, but ultimately failed to do so.

"Are you calling out to me?"(Kousuke)

Sensing no imminent danger, Kousuke turned his head towards Viare and Alice as he stopped resisting. It may have been a reckless judgment, but having no strength to resist, the end result would inevitably be the same.

"I'll be heading out for a bit. I'll somehow get back on my own, alright?"
(Kousuke)

"It has no hostility towards us, but I haven't the faintest clue of its goals. Be careful, got it?"(Alice)

"Mm. There's no need to be so worried Viare, I'll be fine"(Kousuke)

Facing the tearful Viare, he smiled in a carefree manner as his body floated off

the ship towards the Sea Dragon. He was gently placed onto the Sea Dragon's head.

Obtaining Kousuke, the Sea Dragon shifted its body away from the ship and swam in a different direction. Its movements were sudden and caused the ship to nearly capsize.

But everything settled soon after and all on board let out a sigh of relief. While the passengers were baffled at the Sea Dragon's sudden kidnapping of Kousuke, the sailors on board were inspecting the ship for any damages.

After an hour worth of inspection, the ship finally resumed its original course. The sailors felt that nothing else should happen during the trip not knowing that 8 days later they will be assaulted by a mass of sea demons. With so much happening on just one trip, many of the sailors wanted to retire from this hazardous occupation afterwards.

On the emptied deck, Viare and Alice kept their gaze on the distant Sea Dragon and Kousuke. Viare earnestly prayed for Kousuke's safety while Alice pondered the Sea Dragon's motive for taking him. After the Sea Dragon disappeared into the horizon, the two returned to their room.

The Sea Dragon, while carrying Kousuke on its head, kept him mostly paralyzed from moving as it swam. At least he was able to move his head, arms and legs a bit. Most likely it was to keep him from falling, but to Kousuke, it was an ordeal not being able to move for such a long time. Still though, despite the discomfort, at least he was safe from falling as the Sea Dragon's swimming speed was easily many times that of the ship. Based off the wind pressure he felt, it reminded Kousuke of the time when he rode his motor scooter at 50km/hr (31.07mph).

It was a bit difficult to pinpoint the Sea Dragon's speed as the scenery was the same all around them, but it was definitely over a 100km/hr at the very least. Normally, the average human being would be unable to bear such pressure, but the Sea Dragon was guarding Kousuke from some of it, making it seem like they were only going 50km/hr.

"Hey, just where exactly are you taking me?"(Kousuke)

Despite not hoping for a response, he threw a question at the Sea Dragon. It

responded with silence. Since he expected this much, Kousuke tried to lean back slightly and managed to fall onto his back to relax. He closed his eyes and slowly dozed off.

The Sea Dragon, ignored the fact that Kousuke fell asleep, and continued its journey.

Later that evening, Kousuke awoke to find himself near land. As callously as he was kidnapped, he was similarly tossed onto the land.

This was the reason for him being stuck headfirst in the beach.

The shift in the waves that Scheidt originally ignored was when the Sea Dragon arrived near the shore. He probably could have caught a glimpse of the Sea Dragon's shadow disappearing into the night if he came to the beach immediately.

As a matter of fact, the Sea Dragon didn't target and kidnap Kousuke due to his identity. As long as the individual was strong, it would have done the same to them. With its senses, the only individual that met its requirement was the nearby Kousuke.

As for the reason for kidnapping him, it was equally haphazard. Within the Ezenbia continent, there exists a human individual that the Sea Dragon favors. That individual has been troubled these days and in attempts to assist the said individual, the Sea Dragon was gathering "reliable" people. The Sea Dragon decided to gather and toss these "reliable" people near the favored individual, in hopes that they will be of assistance.

Since the two never had a conversation, Kousuke was left in the dark about the Sea Dragon's intention. Hence, the only goal in his mind was to head to Sebushik. With a little thinking, Kousuke knew the Sea Dragon had its reasons for tossing him here, but the lack of a hint made it impossible to confirm.

Regardless of Kousuke's success or failure to assist the favored individual, the Sea Dragon would simply kidnap another to replace him, however.

Changing certain details, Kousuke reiterated to Scheidt what had occurred.

The ship he was on was assaulted by a wave of sea demons. He latched himself onto a piece of wood and was drifting aimlessly until he saw land. As he

tried to swim over, more sea demons appeared and ended up launching him onto the beach. Considering that the truth was that he was kidnapped by a dragon, this story sounded more plausible.

Changing the phrase from “I rode the sea dragon” to “I rode the waves”, Kousuke grinned at how ingenious his wordplay was. Scheidt only saw the grinning Kousuke as peculiar. **【TL: Kairyyuu, depending on the second kana can be read as the “sea waves” or “sea dragon”. They sound the same】**

Despite Kousuke’s efforts, Scheidt felt something off about Kousuke’s explanation. His clothes. He explained that he was adrift, but nothing on him was drenched. To be specific, he looked a little soaked as if he was in a light drizzle, but for someone who was originally submerged in the water, it simply did not match.

In the end, Scheidt kept his mouth closed about this point. He wanted to maintain a friendly relationship with Kousuke. **【TL: You swing that way? Sorry, but Kou-chan already has two wife candidates!】**

"You went through quite the trouble"(Scheidt)

"Seriously..."(Kousuke)

"Since it’s like that you must have nothing to eat or drink, right? I have a bit on hand so do you want some?"(Scheidt)

It must have been at least a few days he did not eat or drink since he was adrift, so Scheidt thought.

"Is that alright?"(Kousuke)

"Yea, helping others in need is normal, no?"(Scheidt)

Forgetful of the importance of the saying “Nothing is more expensive than free”, Kousuke accepted Scheidt’s offer.

The meal was quite meager, bread, water, and some dried meat. Still, it turned out to be quite delicious as he was fairly starved.

"What are you plans from now on, Kousuke?"(Scheidt)

Scheidt asked the now full Kousuke.

"Go home"(Kousuke)

"Makes sense, but do you have any money?"(Scheidt)

"Ah..."(Kousuke)

Kousuke sifted through his pockets and pulled out his wallet. He only found 2 silvers and a few copper coins inside. He realized that the rest of his money was in his luggage, the very luggage still left on the ship.

"..... I guess I need to earn a bit before getting home"(Kousuke)

At the very least his identification card was still on hand so accepting guild requests was still possible.

"Interested in teaming up? I know a great way to earn quite a bit"(Scheidt)

"But I don't need that much though"(Kousuke)

Being confided in about a profitable situation made Kousuke, with his upbringing in Japan, feel skeptical. **【TL: "Why confide in others when you can grab it all for yourself" kind of thing】**

"I know it sounds suspicious, even I would be hard pressed to trust such a thing. Still, I need your help on this since doing it alone is quite difficult"(Scheidt)

"Are you sure that I'll be able to make a difference?"(Kousuke)

"A hunch. It keeps telling me that taking you along is the right thing to do. It's never done me wrong since it's a gift I was born with. Take a look"(Scheidt)

He pulled out a card displaying the gift he has, smiling brilliantly to further prove his confidence in it. In the past, regardless of how perilous the situation became, his hunch has always prevented his death. Since his hunch keeps telling him to take Kousuke along, he will put his utmost into convincing the other party to join.

"It really is a gift"(Kousuke)

Kousuke tilted his head in thought, hypothesizing that Scheidt's gift reacted to his Dragonslayer gift.

"..... How about giving me some details first, I'll decide after that"(Kousuke)

"Well, I guess that's fine"(Scheidt)

Scheidt immediately agreed, as asking another for a favor without disclosing anything felt quite rude.

"See that mountain over there? It's called Mount Mubrant and its home to many monsters. There's a spring near the peak and it streams down the mountain. Ah, well, the spring doesn't really matter, but near the spring is a spot with plenty of sunlight and many rare herbs grow there. I'm in need of one particular herb from the bunch. To be more specific, I need the medicinal water produced by mixing that herb's flower pollen and morning dew"(Scheidt)

"What does the medicinal water do?"(Kousuke)

"It's really good for the throat"(Scheidt) **【TL: dafuq?】**

"Good for the throat? I'm guessing you're gathering this for someone with a bad sore throat?"(Kousuke)

"Not exactly. The throat is very valuable to the individual and she is currently attempting to collect as much of it. Have you ever heard of the World's Best Diva? She's this kingdom's princess"(Scheidt)

Kousuke didn't know so he shook his head.

"I'm surprised since she's quite famous. Well it's like that, a person of that stature needs it so I'm here to get some. Now you see why I said this is a great way to make a lot of money?"(Scheidt)

"Since it's so profitable, wouldn't there be many adventurers accepting this request constantly?"(Kousuke)

Scheidt raised three fingers.

"There are three reasons for its scarcity.

One: That herb only blooms at high altitude.

Two: The medicinal water is produced in limited quantity and the timing to gather it is set every year.

Three: The monsters that roam the mountain is a rank or two stronger than anything else in this region"(Scheidt)

"So the third one is main deterring reason for most of the adventurers, I see"
(Kousuke)

"Exactly"(Scheidt)

Kousuke determined that Scheidt's hunch isn't a vague feeling, but something more pinpoint at this conjunction. Even if he were to venture alone, with his hunch alone, he could easily avoid or escape from danger. Clearly, even without Kousuke's help, Scheidt could retrieve the medicinal water himself.

However... It's also the case that Kousuke is in need of money. Not a fortune's worth, but at least something substantial enough. Kousuke could clearly reject the request, but something was constantly nagging in the back of his mind.

It began the moment he received some food from Scheidt. After receiving such good will without requesting any compensation, it brought about hesitation in Kousuke. This was clearly something Scheidt aimed for. Kousuke was baited, Scheidt clearly knew he would be rejected if he asked outright so he planned this according to his hunch.

"..... I'll agree under one condition"(Kousuke)

"And that would be?"(Scheidt)

"Due to personal reasons, I want to maintain a low profile so keep the news of my involvement in this to yourself.

I'll assist in exchange for a portion of the reward and nothing else, sound good?"(Kousuke)

Scheidt showed a slightly disappointed expression. The condition proposed was something so minor.

"Just that? That's fine by me. Well then, I look forward to our cooperation"
(Scheidt)

"Mm. Likewise"(Kousuke)

The two shook hands and proceeded to head to the nearest village. The two needed to prepare before venturing out to the mountain, and Kousuke needed some rest after being "adrift" for so long.

"By the way Scheidt, why are you after the medicinal water? For money or is

there another reason"(Kousuke)

"The latter, I want to see the princess in person, you see"(Scheidt)

Scheidt hesitated slightly before responding and tried to lower Kousuke's suspicion with a normal reason.

"I see, so you can meet her if you have some of the medicinal water"
(Kousuke)

"Apparently she wants to thank the people who put themselves in danger herself"(Scheidt)

"Hmm, I see, quite a bold princess"(Kousuke)

"As a singer, she's constantly on the move from place to place, meeting new people. It would be unusual if she wasn't bold and outspoken"(Scheidt)

[And she probably doesn't feel like a part of the royalty with how small the Kingdom of Karbaret is](Scheidt)

Towards this though, Scheidt has no complaint. On the contrary, being able to meet a member of the royalty in person was to his convenience.

"Oh, I think I see it. Is that the village you mentioned earlier?"(Kousuke)

"It is, but how can you see it from this far? I'm familiar with this region and I can barely make out the village. And here I felt that my eyesight was quite good"(Scheidt)

Scheidt was a bit shocked at how well Kousuke could see in this dark forest.

"I'm quite confident with my eyesight"(Kousuke)

"A moonless night and shrouded by trees and shrubs, that's quite the ability you have there"(Scheidt)

After speaking, Scheidt was tempted to ask Kousuke if he was also a gift bearer.

However, considering Kousuke's situation, Scheidt kept his mouth shut. He wanted to keep the relationship between them as amicable as possible, at least until he gets the medicinal water. Scheidt decided to ask after everything was done.

Chapter 29: How to climb a dangerous mountain comfortably

"Got everything?"(Scheidt)

"I'm ready, but you sure about this?"(Kousuke)

Kousuke stated as he faintly smiled apologetically.

"I said it's alright"(Scheidt)

After the two thoroughly prepared, they began to head out of the village.

The two were bundled up heavily in mountaineering clothes and boots. Scheidt was still covered in his cloak while Kousuke had a brand new blade strapped to his waist.

Kousuke felt apologetic towards Scheidt at the moment. Despite the village being small and the various expenses, including the overnight stay, was on the cheap side, it still felt uncomfortable for Kousuke to have everything paid for.

This happened since Kousuke's plan to work to pay for everything was rejected by Scheidt, who was in a rush to return to the kingdom.

"It wasn't all that expensive and I still have three quarters of my funds left. Once we finish this, I'll earn everything and more back anyways. Just take it as a precautionary measure, I don't want anything to go wrong so spending a little extra to guarantee success isn't such a big deal"(Scheidt)

This is how Scheidt truly felt. He wasn't aiming to guilt Kousuke into accepting like before, rather, he was that determined to succeed on this trip. Money had very little importance in comparison. As long as he has a little left to travel back to the capital, everything else can be spent.

"Then.. I'll return the amount I owe you once we get our reward"(Kousuke)

"Bah, I don't need that either"(Scheidt)

Scheidt grunted his displeasure, but was finally convinced in the end. The two

stood side-by-side as they left the village.

Their destination, Mt. Mubrant, was approximately half a day away from the village. Reaching the spring would take another half a day from the bottom of the mountain.

As the two travelled to their destination, Kousuke received relevant information of the continent from Scheidt.

Of course, the journey there was eventful in itself. Though there were no bandits, the two were assaulted by monsters twice along the way. They were all pitifully weak in front of Kousuke, who thoroughly eradicated them nonchalantly with a few magic blasts.

What shocked Scheidt was that Kousuke did all this without even turning towards the monsters. He scrutinized further, hoping to see the depths of Kousuke's strength as well as his most preferred combat style.

In comparison, Scheidt's combat style was to encroach on the foe's opening with his short sword. He maintained unscathed throughout the journey, largely contributed by the fact that the monsters were also too weak for him.

Unbeknownst to Scheidt, Kousuke was observing his battles with great interest, finding many similarities to Nagare's style, especially the way that Scheidt has never frontally confronted any of the monsters. Of course, with his lack of experience, it was difficult to tell just how strong Scheidt really was since he was clearly not going all out.

"We'll camp here tonight"(Scheidt)

With the night's descent, the two finally reached the foot of the mountain. Kousuke had the same idea as well, concluding that traveling and camping in this darkness on a mountain was a terrible idea.

As the two prepared the campfire and tent, Kousuke inquired about the mountain.

"Would you happen to know what kind of monsters reside on this mountain?"
(Kousuke)

"Yea, there are three kinds"(Scheidt)

The first one is a large, carnivorous bee, as big as a crow. Its carapace is tough and it has a highly venomous stinger capable of instantly killing a giant boar. Even without its stinger, its jaws are capable of shattering through the thickest of trees.

The second one is a stone boar. Despite its size being similar to a normal boar, its skin is matted with a stone-like substance and will charge into any they perceive as foes.

The third one is a cloaked swallow. These will have either sky blue or forest green feathers and are roughly three times the size of a normal swallow. The feathers on their wings are bladed and produced many rumors that these birds have decapitated or removed other limbs of unwary adventurers.

"The most important thing about the carnivorous bees is to not approach their nest. It's easily found as it's a huge mound of rocks and dirt, but inside it has at least 50-100 of those bees. They're sensitive to anything that approaches the nest, so every bee inside will come out and assault trespassers"(Scheidt)

A single bee is comparable in strength to the monsters they've encountered on the trip to the mountain. However, the moment it becomes a swarm, the danger level becomes inestimable.

"That's quite dreadful"(Kousuke)

Kousuke shivered at imagining the swarm chasing him.

"Definitely. A single one is easy to deal with, but a swarm is definitely too dangerous. Their carapace might be hard, but it's not as tough as rocks. Even newbie adventurers can handle them as long as they're careful enough"(Scheidt) **【TL: Remember the statue monster, the bees are in for an unfortunate future ;D】**

"Will one call for help if it's in danger?"(Kousuke)

"That won't happen unless that bee was killed near its nest. Alright then, onto the wild boar's detail. Never stand in its charging path. If you can survive with a broken bone or two after getting rammed by them, you are extremely lucky. Luckily, they're not able to steer too well once they start charging so if you dodge and take advantage of the moment they stop their charge, you can easily

trip and land a finishing blow. If you happen to encounter multiples of them, keep track of each and every one of their movements. They tend to coordinate their charges from multiple directions"(Scheidt)

"Got it. Hmm, I think it's ready now? Yup, nicely cooked"(Kousuke)

Tasting the soup, Kousuke felt satisfied with the flavor and passed a bowlful over to Scheidt.

Scheidt gratefully accepted the bowl. After taking a sip he continued his explanation.

"In regards to the cloaked shallow, the only warning I can give about them is to not enter their territory. Those fellas are hard to see and sensing their presence with their high-speed is very difficult; dodging even more so. Still, despite their sharp wings, they can't slice through metallic objects. It's possible to armor up to counter their assault, but that'll just slow us down too much" (Scheidt)

"By the way, I can use flight magic. Is it possible to fly to the peak with it?" (Kousuke)

Kousuke asked as he considered the possibility of a shortcut.

"Aren't you just asking to get targeted? Those bees and birds are definitely faster than you"(Scheidt)

"That's true. Come to think of it, you must have something readied for this since you were originally planning on going alone, right?"(Kousuke)

"Mm, I have some scent concealing bombs for those bees. I also planned on entering the mountain from the opposite side of the cloaked swallows' territory to avoid them completely. I didn't prepare anything for the boars, but I received some info that they make a lot of noise in general so they can be avoided easily. It's a walk in the park after that. Oh and pray to the gods for a safe travel, can't forget that"(Scheidt)

Recalling the gods he met, Kousuke decided in his heart to not pray to them as they would definitely make this trip more enjoyable..... for themselves. **【TL: Nooo pray to them, I want enjoyable】**

Suddenly, ever so faintly, Kousuke heard “We would never do that” but seeing Scheidt’s non-responsive face he just assumed it was just the wind. **【TL: They’re really into this voyeurism thing, huh...】**

As the night grew later, Scheidt decided to take the first watch as Kousuke went to sleep.

As if fearing the denizens of the mountain, the monsters in the surrounding area never approached the two’s camp. The monsters within the mountain as well did not approach.

Dawn break.

To avoid the cloaked swallows’ territory, the two walked along the southern side of the mountain for an hour before entering.

Upon entering, the surrounding was overflowing with the sounds of insects crying and leaves rustling along the stone floor. With the sudden absence of bird chirping, Kousuke furrowed his brows slightly. He clearly heard birds chirping not too long ago.

"By the way, besides the monsters you explained does this mountain happen to have any dangerous beasts?"(Kousuke)

"There shouldn’t be any. Small animals should be around, but anything large would instantly become the bees’ meal"(Scheidt)

Enlightened, Kousuke figured the absence of bird chirping was caused by the bees hunting them all.

"So I guess we only need to keep wary for those monsters then. Keep track for the bee’s wing flapping and the boar’s loud footsteps, got it"(Kousuke)

"I heard those bees sometime stay still on trees and observe their surroundings. Don’t just assume they aren’t around since you can’t hear their wings, got it?"(Scheidt)

"Roger that"(Kousuke)

Suddenly, Kousuke’s ear picked up a faint sound of something piercing through the air. Kousuke pulled out his knife and stabbed it in front of Scheidt as he stared towards the direction of the sound. A metallic clang rang out,

shocking Scheidt as he finally realized a bird was blocked by Kousuke's knife.

His shock however was not towards the seeing the blade in front of him, but rather the facts that he didn't notice the cloaked swallow at all and that Kousuke did and even stopped its assault.

Whenever his life was in imminent danger, his "hunch" would warn him, but why did it not work when he was clearly in danger?! There wasn't even a sign of his gift warning him at all!

"So this is the cloaked swallow? I see, it really is hard to see with its green plumages. Why did it appear here though? Isn't its territory on the other side?" (Kousuke)

"It.. Its territory is definitely not around here, but they sometimes wander away, even if it's rare.

..... How did you notice it?"(Scheidt)

As Scheidt slowly calmed from the dangerous encounter, he curiously asked Kousuke.

"I heard its wings piercing through the air. When I glanced towards the direction of the sound I saw a small, green thing flying towards us so I stuck my knife out in its way.

By the way, are there any other useful parts to salvage off the bird besides its bladed wings?"(Kousuke) **【TL: Facepalm】**

"It's not as valuable, but it's meat can be sold too"(Scheidt)

Apparently, the undamaged wings and stingers of the bees can be sold. The boar's meat is also a commodity that vastly outstrips the value of a normal boar's meat in equal weight.

Seeing Kousuke merrily harvesting the bird's wings, Scheidt drew a hypothesis in his mind.

The reason for his gift failing to activate was due to Kousuke's presence. With strength beyond Scheidt's scope of comprehension, Kousuke's presence on this journey is completely negating the need for his gift to activate. This was the only conclusion that made sense to Scheidt.

Shuddering at that thought, he glanced at Kousuke once more and felt extremely lucky for having such a capable partner with him.

Reaching his goal suddenly became much more hopeful and likely now. While maintaining his calm expression, he settled the ripples in his mood since it was still possible his hypothesis was wrong. Just because his companion was strong, becoming complacent and failing to reach his goal would just be utterly devastating.

"Finished harvesting?"(Scheidt)

"Just about finished"(Kousuke)

"Then let's hurry ahead. Ah, I almost forgot. Thank you for saving my life earlier"(Scheidt)

"You're welcome!"(Kousuke)

And so, the two resumed their journey.

As they progressed, Kousuke noticed a carnivorous bee was attempting to camouflage on a nearby tree. He quickly picked up and threw a fist-sized rock and pierced through the bee's hard carapace, instantly killing it. Seeing this, Scheidt was further convinced of his previous hypothesis.

The two soon reached a clearing and took a long, three hour break before resuming their trek. The two soon reached the targeted lake... In a rather comfortable manner. With the exception of the cloaked swallow incident, the two avoided every possible danger that entered Kousuke's detection throughout the entire trip.

The current time was slightly later in comparison to their arrival at the foot of the mountain. Therefore, the two arrived at the lake in the middle of the night. Since their goal of the medicinal water was only produced and harvestable during dawn, the two camped themselves down near the herbs' growing spot.

Abstaining from creating an attention-grabbing campfire, the two enjoyed a cold dinner before realizing they had absolutely nothing to do until morning.

To kill some time and to ward off the cold mountain air, the two slowly sipped on some sake. Scheidt also pulled out some seasoned beans to accompany the

sake.

"Hey, Kousuke"(Scheidt)

"Hmm?"(Kousuke)

Scheidt's voice brought back Kousuke, who was absentmindedly thinking about how Viare and Alice were doing.

"Are you possibly a knight or an imperial guard from somewhere?"(Scheidt)

Scheidt asked Kousuke as he stared up into the sky.

"Nothing like that. In fact, I'm surprised that anyone would even come to such a conclusion. Did anything I do resemble someone of a knightly or noble stature?"(Kousuke)

"No, not really, but with your capabilities, it's even more unbelievable that you're just a run-of-the-mill adventurer"(Scheidt)

"Unfortunately, I really am just a run-of-the-mill adventurer. Back home, all I did were odd-job requests left and right"(Kousuke)

"I'm sure there were even more profitable requests available though. Was there a reason for just doing those odd-jobs?"(Scheidt)

Scheidt's voice wavered in disbelief as he heard Kousuke's previous work record.

"Money wasn't the highest priority. I was just curious about all the various jobs available so I wanted to try them all. Also, I wasn't too comfortable with fighting then"(Kousuke)

"Just how strong were the people around you to make YOU that timid around them?!"(Scheidt)

Scheidt ended up having an exaggerated understanding of how "insane" Kousuke's upbringing was. It was understandable though, considering the possibility of concluding that the person sitting next to him was from a peaceful, parallel world was infinitely close to zero.

At Kousuke's lack of response, Scheidt thoroughly believed that Kousuke attained his strength through a tenuous, dog-eat-dog upbringing.

"It really makes me want to see how your status is set up. If possible.. I know it's asking a lot, but may I take a look at your card?"(Scheidt)

"Sorry, anything but that please..."(Kousuke)

"..... Then how about telling me your highest or your lowest stat?"(Scheidt)

"Well, I guess that should be fine. My lowest stat is D+"(Kousuke)

Kousuke's Spirit stat is honestly at D+, if his Dragonslayer title's one level bonus was ignored. In the end, he really isn't lying. Since he was not asked for the inclusion of gifts and titles, he had no reason to reveal anything beyond the bare minimum. In fact, announcing that his lowest stat is really C+ has other problematic implications.

Still, D+ as the lowest was quite amazing in itself.

"That.... Explains a lot"(Scheidt)

Scheidt immediately shifted his shocked gaze towards Kousuke. Anyone who saw his face could immediately tell how amazed he was.

In comparison, Scheidt's two highest stats were Dexterity and Spirit, both at D+. Finding out that his two highest stats were the equivalent of Kousuke's lowest stat was just too much to accept.

"Just how much do I have to train to reach that kind of strength..."(Scheidt)

"That..... I can't really tell"(Kousuke)

"At the very least, I would need to be fighting nearly non-stop against monsters, I believe"(Scheidt)

The two's chatter ended up shifting away from their status.

They ended up talking about everything else and shared a lot of seemingly trivial details instead. Still, certain details like "where did you live" or "where did you train" were thoroughly memorized by Scheidt. How often does someone have a chance to become acquainted with someone powerful? Scheidt would not let this opportunity pass.

Just like the evening before, the two rotated watch as the night passed.

The two awoke before sunrise. Having a quick and light meal, they

immediately cleaned up the camp and prepared to gather the medicinal water. Of course, by preparation, they only took out a small, corked bottle from their bag to gather the water.

"There should be enough dew now, right?"(Scheidt)

Kousuke looked at each and every flower closely before nodding in approval to Scheidt. The two slowly approached the flowers, afraid that their steps' vibration may shake the dews off.

"Alright, let's begin. It's a simple collection process, just tilt the flower and have the bottle ready to collect the falling dew"(Scheidt)

"I see, even a beginner can do this"(Kousuke)

"It's not like a beginner can make it up here, though"(Scheidt)

The two quickly began their collection before insects arrive to drink the dew. Drop by drop they collected until they filled up fifteen drops worth. The two's bottles were roughly even in quantity in the end.

At the very least, each bottle held 3 gold coins worth of dew.

"Make sure to seal it properly, alright?"(Scheidt)

"Of course, I wouldn't want our efforts to go to waste due to carelessness"(Kousuke)

He tightly sealed the bottle with a cork and wrapped it up thickly with cloth before stowing it away into his bag.

"Now then, let's leave this mountain"(Kousuke)

"Don't drop your guard, monsters are still active at this time"(Scheidt)

Quickly, the two began their descent.

They spotted some monsters along the way, but luckily avoided each and every one. The two safely descended without fighting once.

Scheidt was extremely gleeful over the success of this venture. How couldn't he be since the entire trip was as relaxing as a beach stroll?

However, his momentary lapse in wariness lead to an undesirable situation.

In front of the two, there were four adventurer-like individuals. Stoic faced and weapons ready, they charged at the two exiting the forest without warning.

Even Kousuke failed to perceive their presence as he did not expect people to be intentionally hiding their breath nearby. The relaxing nature of the trip made him slightly less wary.

The battle ended as silently as it started.

Scheidt was slightly injured and Kousuke was completely unscathed. As for the four assailants, they were unconscious on the ground with their limbs tied.

"Who are these people?"(Kousuke)

"Bandits, I think. They're probably too lacking to actually climb the mountain, but they still wanted the medicinal water. Since they couldn't get it themselves, they laid near the entrance in hopes of ambushing people who managed to get the dew"(Scheidt) **【TL: Yup makes sense, let's ambush people who are clearly stronger than us... GENIUS!】**

Kousuke nodded in agreement to Scheidt's explanation.

"By the way, did your movements get a bit dull?"(Kousuke)

"I froze for a bit from the surprise attack"(Scheidt)

Grunting at Kousuke's remark, Scheidt quickly pulled out a pill and swallowed it.

"I see. Hm? What did you just eat?"(Kousuke)

"Antidote. Their weapons were coated with something so I'm just taking some precaution"(Scheidt)

"Hmm. Let me know if you still feel odd, I can fix you up with magic"(Kousuke)

"Thanks, I'll let you know if I need it"(Scheidt)

"So, how should we handle these guys?"(Kousuke)

"..... I doubt the closest village has a cell to hold these guys in so why not just leave them here?"(Scheidt)

"There wasn't a cell there?"(Kousuke)

Kousuke tried to remember how the village was like and realized he really didn't see a proper holding cell-like structure.

Kousuke became silent after this. He didn't really want to just leave them here, but seeing Scheidt's cold face made him reconsider.

"Well, I guess that's fine too. Now then, should we head to the imperial capital now?"(Kousuke)

Kousuke began walking away from the incapacitated assailants.

If their luck is bad, they'll end up in the bellies of monsters. If they wake up in time, they can at least escape with the knife on the floor near them.

In the end, Kousuke didn't care anymore what will happen to them.

"Mm. We'll stop by a town along the way to resupply and should reach the capital in around four days"(Scheidt)

"By the way, can you tell me about any specialty products, famous sites, or this country's origin story?"(Kousuke)

Despite being trapped on a strange, foreign land, Kousuke felt somewhat excited being able to see some interesting things before heading home. Even if it's nothing useful, at least he would be able to bring back some fun stories to his friends back home.

Scheidt contemplated a bit before answering.

"This country rose about 150 years ago. Originally, it was a part of a larger country to the south west. A marquis was rewarded for his meritorious deeds this land and the absolute ruler-ship over it.

In reality, it was a colony, a vassal state that was still under the laws and dictations of its mother country. However, over the decades, through the efforts of an excellent monarch and his officials, they were able to produce an enormous wealth through trade and bought semi-independence from the mother country.

They weren't able to completely buy the country's freedom since the location of this land was too valuable as an asset during emergencies. However, despite not being able to attain their desired emancipation, the mother country's

intervention in this country's ruler-ship effectively vanished.

That about sums up this country's origin"(Scheidt)

"What was the meritorious deed the marquis performed?"(Kousuke)

"Earthquakes and tsunamis completely destroyed the coasts of this country. The marquis in question was of immense assistance in the revival of the coasts, or so I heard"(Scheidt)

"He was rewarded a country so his deeds were definitely not small"(Kousuke)

"That may not be the exact truth though. He could have just been forced upon a barren land seeing how well he did with the coast's revival.

Consider this, despite the recovery, there is no way the conditions for agriculture and commerce in the area were as good as before the disaster. Furthermore, the public order of the coast was definitely in a worsened state. With the mother country having their own troubles back in the capital, they most likely didn't have the time to spare for this place so they pushed it onto someone they felt was capable.

Fortunately or not, that capable being just happened to be the very marquis that restored the place. To maintain their public image, they provided a suitable "payment" to the marquis and washed their hands off of the actual work. I'm sure the reconstruction fund provided was of proper amount, though. There's no way they would leave a nearby place in such a disarray since doing so would only earn the people's discontent"(Scheidt)

Of course, the possibility that the marquis was just too excellent could be the reason for this pseudo-exile as well, but Scheidt kept quiet about that. Being thrown onto an unfamiliar and untamed land, the marquis would lose all abilities to intervene with any matters back in the mother country. No matter how excellent he was, the difficulties of making and running a country out of nothing was sky-high.

This guess was based on records indicating that the marquis was being ostracized by his peers during that time.

"This was considered a suitable payment?"(Kousuke)

"You get to become a king, you know? For any ambitious person, such a deal is an ideal thing. I just don't know if the marquis was an ambitious person or not, though"(Scheidt)

"I guess the only way to find out is to see if the current royal family kept a journal or something of the marquis. Alright then, I guess that's enough of history. What can you tell me about this country's unique products and traits?"(Kousuke)

"That can only be our princess, the Diva"(Scheidt)

Scheidt immediately replied.

Kousuke nodded as he already knew this, but he immediately frowned in confusion at Scheidt's following words.

"As long as our princess lives, this country will be able to survive"(Scheidt)

"What? As a diva, she plays a pivotal role in this country's politics?"(Kousuke)

"No, that's not it. The princess is heavily favored by the Sea Dragon. It's to the point that the Sea Dragon would visit every three months just to hear her sing. Any ill-intent towards her would simply earn the ire of the Sea Dragon"(Scheidt)

"Is this country under the protection of the dragon then?"(Kousuke)

"Not exactly. The Sea Dragon is not protecting the country at all. It's just protecting our princess, it wouldn't care if the rest of the country fell into ruins. The day she passes on would likely be the day the Sea Dragon would also disappear"(Scheidt)

In truth, this country has made a huge error by wanting to use the Sea Dragon in a militaristic fashion.

With the princess's plea, the Sea Dragon would assist the country a bit, but in return the other nearby countries would be frenzied in action. In the end, the small assistance the Sea Dragon could provide would be useless against the other countries' retaliation so they could only shelf such idea. The country wouldn't be able to survive if they had to mobilize the army just to protect the princess. They also feared the nearby countries may enforce an embargo on them as well.

In the end, the country decided to not rely on the Sea Dragon for anything besides its protection over the princess.

"..... So that dragon favors this princess, I see..."(Kousuke)

Kousuke had a strong feeling that the dragon that threw him here was related to this diva princess.

However, this was irrelevant as he was already stuck here for the time being. He continued his travel with Scheidt with his goal of going home in mind.

Shaking out irrelevant thoughts from his mind, Kousuke continued onto other topics of interest about this country with Scheidt.

Chapter 30: The Task and the Music Room

Please read this before continuing to the chapter.

I need to clarify something. In nearly all instances where a person spoke to Kousuke, they were pronouncing it as “Koh-soo-ke (Kohsuke)” rather than “Ko-oo-soo-ke (Kousuke)” [the -oo-is very short]. I made it more obvious for this chapter, but I will only do so for this chapter since it was purposely focused on. In the previous and the follow chapters, I will leave it as “Kousuke” in all instances for the purpose of not confusing any readers.

The two reached the imperial capital in three days, a day earlier than planned.

Despite its name, the imperial capital was not built on a large scale. In fact, Kousuke felt that this place was even smaller than Ricardo where Horun resided.

The structuring of the capital was typical. Various, small buildings surrounding a large castle at the center and a 2-meter tall wall enclosing the perimeter. The wall had three gates, each of which had a long, unobstructed road leading directly to the castle. Contrary to the castles he’d imagined, Kousuke felt that the castle in the distance boasted of fortitude and humility rather than the much-expected gaudiness.

Entering through “The Falcon Gate”, the two began their search for a room.

According to Scheidt, the door was named as such since an image of a falcon would appear on it when the gate is closed.

The other two gates were aptly named “The Rose Gate” and “The Bronco Gate”. They were erected by the first king and were lovingly preserved by his predecessors.

Finding an inn, the two quickly settled in and took out the bottles.

"Well then, I'll be heading off to the castle now"(Scheidt)

"Take care. I think I might go sightseeing in the meantime"(Kousuke)

"Mm, got it"(Scheidt)

Kousuke waved goodbye as Scheidt left the inn.

He ignored everything around him and quickly stepped towards the castle.

The guards at the castle entrance quickly sighted Scheidt and gripped his spear tightly in caution.

"I brought the medicinal water as requested, may I pass?"(Scheidt)

Scheidt requested as he presented the bottle.

"Please allow us to inspect the authenticity of the product first"(Guard)

The stiff-faced guard held out his palm. Passing the bottle to the guard, Scheidt was led to a small station while the inspection occurred.

The guard grabbed a bottle from the shelf and poured its content into a dish. He carefully uncorked Scheidt's bottle to begin the test. He dipped a needle into the bottle and mixed it into the dish. The mixture slowly began to emit a sweet aroma, completely masking the room.

Nodding at the result, the guard turned towards Scheidt.

"I confirmed its authenticity. Please accept my gratitude for your efforts in its retrieval.

After your belongings are checked, I shall have someone lead you inside"
(Guard)

After having all weapons removed and stored in the station, another guard appeared to lead Scheidt inside.

The interior of the castle was much like its exterior, simple and dignified.

"Please wait here for a moment"(Guard2)

Being idle in the waiting room, Scheidt began to wonder how long he would have to wait, but was surprised to see the same guard immediately return to receive him.

"The king and princess await your arrival. Mind yourself in their presence"

(Guard2)

"Of course, please lead me in"(Scheidt)

Following the guard's lead, the two entered the throne room.

A crowned man in his 50's and a pale, blue dressed woman in her 20's sat on the throne. Their features were overly plain and a slight change in their wardrobe would easily make them appear like a commoner. Their dignified aura, however, was impossible to hide.

The king stared directly at Scheidt as the princess looked slightly confused seeing no one with Scheidt.

Standing in line around the throne were 6 heavily armored guards and 2 civil officers.

Scheidt slowly approached the throne and knelt at a distance with his face down.

"You may raise your head"(King)

"Thank you, your majesty"(Scheidt)

"You have our gratitude for your efforts in the retrieval of the medicinal water"(King)

"Yes, we are gratified by your efforts"(Princess)

With the king's praise, the princess subsequently voiced her approval. As expected of the Diva Princess, her voice was absolutely soothing to the ears.

"Bring forth the promised reward of six gold coins. Are you satisfied with this?"(King)

The reward was the equivalent of a typical household's income in six months. There was nothing unsatisfactory about this.

"With due respect, permission to speak, your majesty, your highness"
(Scheidt)

At Scheidt's request, the king's eyebrow rose slightly.

"Speak"(King)

"I was aided by another individual in the retrieval of the medicinal water. As such, I only deserve half of this reward. However, I wish to receive something else in its stead"(Scheidt)

"Could you perhaps explain why the other individual is not with you now?"(Princess)

The princess queried. Her eyes twinkled as if understanding something.

"The other was satisfied knowing that he would be paid and is currently resting in the inn"(Scheidt)

"I see. If possible, could you invite him here as well?"(Princess)

"At your highness's command, there are only a few that could reject such a request.

However, please excuse my bluntness, but may I know the reason why you wish to meet Kousuke?"(Scheidt) **【TL: WHY ARE YOU REVEALING NAMES?!】**

"Let us continue this at a later time. For now, please allow us to know the contents of your request"(King)

Scheidt scanned his surrounding and explained after a short pause.

"I was an intelligence agent from the Kingdom of Shidalm"(Scheidt)

The entire throne room was shocked to hear this information. The king and princess's gaze became slightly cold and the guards were immediately glaring in hostility towards Scheidt.

Shidalm, the country adjacent to Karbaret to their southeast, much like their mother country, was a behemoth in comparison.

"Was? Are we to assume that you are one no longer?"(King)

"Yes, your majesty. The overbearing and corrupt politics became too much to endure... So I escaped"(Scheidt)

"You were definitely pursued, were you not? How impressive you must be to be able to escape their clutches"(King)

The four assailants that attacked the two as they left the mountain were a part of the pursuers. Those four exposed their identity by being silent. If they

were to have explained why they were attacking, it was likely that it would affect Kousuke's decision to attack them. If Kousuke actually backed away from that fight, the four would have definitely succeeded in eliminating Scheidt. Even Scheidt felt hesitant to attack as the four were originally his comrades.

"My gift allows myself to foresee imminent danger. With this, I was able to avoid detection and safely arrive here"(Scheidt)

"I see. And? What is it that you wish from us instead?"(King)

"I wish to be taken in by your majesty. I wish to be able to live out the rest of my life peacefully, please grant me this reprieve, your majesty!"(Scheidt)

"..... State your reasoning for choosing our country"(King)

"Yes, your majesty.

Only in this country would I be able to directly speak with someone of royal blood. With the peculiar nature of my escape, I require the assistance of one with immense power to be able to put a complete stop to Shidalm's attempts on my life. Of course, I am also willing to provide my services to a just monarch as yourself, your majesty.

This was my thought process for choosing this country"(Scheidt)

Unlike royalty, if Scheidt were to have chosen to take haven with a powerful noble instead, more problems would arise.

One such path as being used as a pawn for the noble's personal gain, like aiming for the throne. In hindsight, the king before Scheidt could also be of similar disposition as a corrupt noble, but being able to appeal directly to his majesty how useful he can be would more than likely lessen the chance of becoming a disposable pawn.

"You believe that we would step forward for you in this case?"(King)

"No, your majesty. I wish to provide you something valuable that would alleviate the situation as a whole"(Scheidt)

"Elaborate"(King)

"Information. With me, I brought various internal secrets of Shidalm that only those from the intelligence agency and royalties have access to"(Scheidt)

"Hmm..... The contents of such information would definitely assist in deterring them. Now then, we have one last thing to speak of"(King)

"Yes, your majesty"(Scheidt)

With this, the king squinted harshly. The sudden shift in his disposition caused Scheidt to feel a mountainous pressure on his shoulder.

As expected of the king, a ruler's aura cannot be ignored.

"You are now under suspicion of being a spy for Shidalm. Now, convince us otherwise"(King)

As the head of this country, the king could not accept Scheidt's story to be wholly true.

From the perspective of other countries, this country would be only considered a minor power. Any failure could potentially lead to this country's collapse and would instantly destroy the efforts of his predecessors.

"As of now... I can only verbally deny such accusation..."(Scheidt)

Scheidt could only shake his head in denial.

"As expected. Even the information you brought could be forgeries bent on misleading us. Your presence here alone could be used to sow discord among the mass"(King)

"Please allow myself to prove my loyalty. I shall work for the benefits of this country and hamper the Shidalm Kingdom"(Scheidt)

Seeing where the king was leading, Scheidt voiced his decision.

"Not yet. We shall investigate and further gauge the consequences of harboring you in. We will proceed accordingly then"(King)

"What shall become of myself in the mean time?"(Scheidt)

"We shall have you detained. Do not fret, you're simply not allowed to leave the country and we shall have someone monitor you. Also, your weapons shall be confiscated indefinitely until we state otherwise"(King)

Scheidt internally sighed in relief, at least it wasn't the worst possible outcome. He felt that heading towards imprisonment and torture.

At the very least, they won't be too hostile considering Scheidt's retrieval of the medicinal water.

With every word and action planned, he has successfully brought about a relatively positive result. In hindsight though, everything he did was required to meet the king in the end.

"Your majesty, one last word, if I may"(Scheidt)

"Hmm? We'll allow it"(King)

"The other individual, Kohsuke, is an unrelated adventurer in my plight. I implore you to not punish him or confiscate his justified reward"(Scheidt)

"We have no objection on that matter. Kohsuke, this man, is someone difficult to deal with to begin with"(King)

"How is that possible?"(Scheidt)

Shocked, Scheidt's eyes opened widely at the king's statement.

"In regards to this, I shall provide an explanation"(Princess)

The once silent princess opened her mouth. Hearing her voice, Scheidt turned his gaze toward the princess. Seeing she had full attention, she nodded and began her explanation.

"This may come as a surprise, but your coming today with the medicinal water was foretold.

And no, we were not monitoring those entering and exiting the forest, but instead I received an oracle from the goddess, Seminruuz"(Princess)

"By Seminruuz, do you perhaps mean the Goddess of Music?"(Scheidt)

"That is correct"(Princess)

Scheidt was even more confused, just how does this all relate to the Goddess of Music? Why would her sight be on this meeting?

"The content of the oracle is as such: "The one named Kohsuke among the two bringing the medicinal water has much knowledge of unique and unknown songs. Invite him, and listen to his songs. With his help, your horizon shall broaden""(Princess)

"So Kohsuke was nominated by the goddess, I see. This is quite unbelievable" (Scheidt)

He could only give off a dry laugh at this situation.

[Just how many more surprises are you going to give me, Kohsuke](Scheidt)

Scheidt suddenly realized something. The odd look the princess gave him upon entering now made sense to him. She was expecting TWO people.

"I have nothing more to add after knowing Kohsuke's safety would be preserved"(Scheidt)

"Well then, it may be abrupt, but we have a request we would like you to complete.

Worry not, it is but a simple task. Bring a guard with you back to the inn and invite the one called Kohsuke to the castle"(King)

Agreeing to the task, Scheidt left the castle with a guard in tow.

He returned to the inn thinking that Kousuke has probably left to sightsee the capital. However, what awaited him in the room was that very person.

"Oh, welcome back. Is the person behind you your friend?"(Kousuke)

Closing and placing the book on the table, Kousuke greeted and look towards the two.

Scheidt knew the book in Kousuke's hand was something recently bought. He must have already went sightseeing and returned. As for funding, the monster parts he harvested must have covered for the book.

"Thanks. I thought you were heading out for an errand, Kohsuke"(Scheidt)

"I did. Still, it's impossible for me to see everything in a day or two so I kept it short and looked around the immediate area"(Kousuke)

"I see"(Scheidt)

"So then, I'll say it again but.. may I know who the person behind you is?" (Kousuke)

"It's decided that I need to go the castle again. The person behind me is accompanying me regarding this"(Scheidt)

"Hmm. Will it take a while? I don't mind, but will you return for dinner?"
(Kousuke)

"I think I'll end up having a meal at the castle instead. The same will probably apply to you as well, Kohsuke"(Scheidt)

Kousuke only stared blankly at Scheidt's last comment.

"Me too?"(Kousuke)

"Yea, you were cordially invited by the royalties themselves"(Scheidt)

"Why? I don't recall doing anything particularly amazing or foul. I can't see any reason for this summons.

Is this about the retrieval of the medicinal water?"(Kousuke)

That was the only thing that Kousuke could relate to this situation.

"No, but the princess received an oracle from the god, Seminruuz. Your name was stated within this oracle"(Scheidt)

"Seminruuz..... The goddess residing over music? Now I'm even more confused"(Kousuke)

"Since Kohsuke knows of many unheard songs, the princess wishes to hear them from you"(Scheidt)

"Ah, so that was the case"(Kousuke)

Kousuke came to a complete understanding hearing Scheidt's explanation. The unknown songs they're referring to are songs from Earth. Being the only person with such knowledge in this world, it'd be a wonder if he wasn't invited personally to share the knowledge.

At least he him being the Dragonslayer wasn't exposed, Kousuke felt that it wouldn't harm him if it's just sharing his music. Rejecting their invitation would just invite suspicion anyways. Being invited in the capacity of a musician, he shall fulfill this and only this duty in full!

Kousuke unpacked some unnecessary things luggage and prepared for departure. Similarly, Scheidt gathered all of his belongings into his bags to bring back to the castle.

"So you're taking everything with you?"(Kousuke)

"It's necessary. I'll be staying at the castle for some time"(Scheidt)

"That's quite something to be able to stay at the castle, but isn't this a waste of this room's deposit?"(Kousuke)

"Well, can't really complain about it now. Done packing? Let's go"(Scheidt)

With the guard taking the lead, the group attracted a lot of attention from the townspeople as they headed to the castle.

Upon reaching the castle gate, they stopped.

"We'll be taking a different route from this point forward. A guide will come for you if you just wait here, Kousuke. Right, Mr. Soldier?"(Scheidt)

Scheidt faced toward the guard with the question, to which the guard answered with a nod.

"See ya, then"(Scheidt)

"You too..... No wait, just how long will you be gone?"(Kousuke)

"I'm not too sure, honestly"(Scheidt)

Since it was completely at the king's discretion. Scheidt honestly had no idea just how long this would take. In the worst-case scenario, he may never see the light of day again. The only thing he could do at this point was to hope for the best and pray that it wouldn't inadvertently harm Kousuke as well.

Ignorant of the actual situation, Kousuke waved goodbye to Scheidt in a carefree manner.

Kousuke leaned against the wall and began observing his surroundings. Around fifteen minutes later, a maid approached him.

"Would you perhaps be Sir Watase?"(Maid)

"Ah, yes. Are you my guide?"(Kousuke)

"Yes, that is exactly so. Please follow me, the princess awaits your arrival"
(Maid)

At the maid's guidance, the two entered the inner portion of the castle. Due

to the small size of the castle, even Kousuke felt he wouldn't get lost. The lack of interior complexity quickly led the two to the room the princess supposedly awaited.

The maid halted at the door. As he thought they reached their destination, Kousuke realized how incorrect his speculation was upon hearing the maid's words.

"We shall have you undergo a physical examination here. Upon entering, please follow the instruction of the individual within"(Maid)

"A physical?"(Kousuke)

"Yes. It is to confirm that you are not carrying anything dangerous"(Maid)

"Oh, that's fine then"(Kousuke)

It's not too dissimilar to a regular check-up, or so he thought.

There was a male servant within the room. He immediately instructed to remove all belongings in possession.

Since he had almost nothing on him, the examination ended very quickly. The only thing among his belongings that can be dangerous and hidden were his throwing knives, of which, he left back at the inn.

【TL: and underneath his timid appearance, the strength of 10,000 bulls are hidden, ready to tear apart all who stand in his way 】

With everything settled, Kousuke was once again led by the maid to another room, probably the true, final destination. **【TL: Who saw what I did here】**

Seated, Kousuke drank some tea while waiting for the princess. It wasn't too long before she arrived.

He was a bit excited since this was his first time seeing a royalty, but her seemingly ordinary appearance left him a bit disappointed.

"Thank you for waiting"(Princess)

"There's no need to thank me, I was hardly kept waiting"(Kousuke)

He unconsciously responded back in a casual fashion. Showing no concern on her face, the princess took a seat across from Kousuke.

"Allow me to introduce myself.

I am the princess of Karbaret, Fleur Rosemarina Karbaret"(Fleur? Rose? Marina?)

"I am Watase Kousuke, read here as Kousuke Watase"(Kousuke)

"Kousuke, is it? Goddess Seminruuz told me you were called Kohsuke"(Fleur)

【TL: It's a slight difference in the enunciation, The Ko-u is pronounced with a slight emphasis on each syllable, while the princess just elongated the Ko-sound and ignored the -u】

"Either is fine by me. A difference of a syllable doesn't really make it that different"(Kousuke)

"Then I shall follow the Goddess's description, Sir Kohsuke.

Let's get down to business. Would you happen to know the reason behind this invitation?"(Fleur)

"Yes. I just need to sing some songs, correct?"(Kousuke)

"Yes. Your efforts shall not go unrewarded.

Ah, before that, the reward for retrieving the medicinal water. Please accept this, there are three gold pieces within.

You have my gratitude for retrieving this from such a dangerous mountain"(Fleur)

Kousuke accepted the pouch and stowed it away into his pocket without confirming the contents. It would be too roguish and uncouth for the royalty to be miserly over a few coins.

With the reward, Kousuke finally had enough to travel back home and splurge a little if he wanted to.

"I was in need of some funding, so it should be me that's thankful.

About the songs, did you want me to sing some now?"(Kousuke)

"That would be too rude to you. There is another room that has been readied for you to sing in"(Fleur)

Fleur stood up and asked Kousuke to follow. In tandem to her steps, the guards around her also followed.

Seeing how natural she looked being heavily guarded, it really emphasized that despite her common demeanor, she really is a princess.

The group walked up a flight of stairs before arriving another room. What entered Kousuke's eyes were many musical instruments in the room. When the door was closed, it felt as though the rest of the world was cut off from the room. A cramped, isolated silence could be felt due to this.

"This room is completely soundproofed. With this, you may sing to your heart's content!"(Fleur)

"Do you, perhaps, practice singing here often, Ms. Fleur?"(Kousuke)

"Yes. I am called to sing at other locations as well when my voice is requested"(Fleur)

Fleur nods slightly towards Kousuke.

"Please begin whenever you're ready"(Fleur)

"Mm...."(Kousuke)

Hesitation appeared on his face being told to suddenly sing. Kousuke knew too many songs from school, CDs, television, *etc.* He had no idea where to begin. Thoroughly recalling all the songs he knew, he realized just how musically blessed Earth was with its variety.

Since it came to this, he decided to ask for a recommendation.

"May I know the genre or preference you wish to hear?"(Kousuke)

"Let's see..... How about something peaceful or pleasant?"(Fleur)

Hearing her choice, Kousuke decided on three songs.

"Your highness, I do not know if it is something that would suit a person of your stature, but I would like to begin now"(Kousuke)

After taking a deep breath, he began.

And, of course, it was something Fleur has never heard of before. While ignoring the few unrecognizable words, she held her full attention on the song.

After some time, Kousuke finished singing and silence once again welcomed the room.

A light applause from Fleur was what soon broke the silence.

"Do you have a different request? Or would you like me to continue with a similar song?"(Kousuke)

"With the same, if you would"(Fleur)

"In that case, I would like to sing two in a row. May I?"(Kousuke)

With Fleur's approval, Kousuke once again began singing.

Upon finishing the next two songs, he received a change in the request and also sang in that direction.

One song after another, one style after another, Kousuke kept singing. It wasn't until sunset that he finally stopped. He did roughly 10 songs an hour, finishing over 30 in the end.

If not for the maid who came to pick the two up for dinner, Kousuke would have likely sung until he passed out.

The moment he finished singing, he was praised endlessly by the guards for his continuous singing and received great admiration from Fleur for letting her hear songs unheard of.

"Goddess Seminruuz is truly amazing! She was right in telling me of your knowledge in music!"(Fleur)

Fleur gleefully smiled as she praised.

"It's my honor to know it was to your liking, your highness"(Kousuke)

"Do you, perhaps, know even more songs?"(Fleur)

"Yes. If time permitted, it would take more than a day to go through them all"(Kousuke)

"Truly? If so, please come again tomorrow to continue!"(Fleur)

With no reason to decline, Kousuke agreed.

"Of course, your highness. Around when should I arrive tomorrow?"(Kousuke)

"I have some arrangements to handle in the morning so please come in a little past noon. The gatekeepers will be informed of your coming, just tell them your name and you'll be led in"(Fleur)

"As you wish, your highness"(Kousuke)

"Would you like to have your dinner here tonight? Though we cannot dine together, I can get the servants to provide you the meal in the guest room you originally waited at"(Fleur)

Kousuke thought for a moment, but ultimately assented to his curiosity for a royal chef's cooking.

Fleur left after explaining to the maid about the meal arrangements. The maid, once again, led Kousuke to the guest room.

Dinner was prepared and brought to the room around 30 minutes later. The prepared dishes were all of the seafood variety and the moment the aroma of the sea exploded from the dishes, it heavily stimulated Kousuke's appetite.

Linguine with manila clams, mussels au gratin, grilled sea bass, she-crab soup, freshly baked bread, and some fruits. The provided drink was something that the princess regularly consumes. It does not contain the medicinal water, but it was proven to be very good for the throat.

After giving his gratitude for the meal, he began with the soup. The rich flavor of the crab made his mouth melt and furthered his appetite. With great zeal, he went through one dish after another and ended up finishing everything in 30 minutes.

"Now that was a meal!"(Kousuke)

"May I remove the dishes, sir?"(Servant)

"Please, and thank you for the meal"(Kousuke)

Giving his thanks to the servant, Kousuke stood up and stretched.

He wondered if it was alright to just leave now, so he asked the same servant. Kousuke was told to wait for a moment for a guide, so he sat back down to relax until he could leave.

Nearby the room Kousuke resided in, Scheidt was around. Right beside

Scheidt was the guard monitoring him. Sensing Scheidt's presence, Kousuke stood up and opened the door.

"Kousuke?"(Scheidt)

"So it really was you, Scheidt"(Kousuke)

"What are you doing here?"(Scheidt)

"I was treated to a meal. I must say, it was quite the feast"(Kousuke)

"I was just about to eat, actually. Mm, but I'm sure I won't be as extravagant as your meal though"(Scheidt)

"The songs I gave probably helped me earn this meal"(Kousuke)

"I'm sure. Alright, I'll see you later then"(Scheidt)

Scheidt waved lightly and quickly left. Seeing how he was freely traveling in the castle, it was clear that the king did not harshly restrict him.

A guide soon arrived and led Kousuke out the castle. He took the scenic route, taking in the hustle and bustle of the capital's night life and eventually returned to the inn.

Kousuke's visit to the castle didn't end on the second day. Three days... Four days... The variety of songs he sang ranged from Eastern to Western. Enka, Anime, Pop, Rock, *etc.* It was quite a selection he chose from.

Due to this request, his schedule has been: Finish the chores in the morning, visit the castle to sing from noon to evening, eat for free at the castle, sleep back at the inn, repeat.

He does take his time before returning to the inn, though. While sightseeing, he would gather information on how to return home.

From what he gathered, there are no harbors in Karbaret that have any ships enroute to Sebushik. This is mostly attributed to the time of the year. It's currently the stormy season for the sea routes to Sebushik and Ezenbia, no one is willing to sail through such danger.

If he wants to immediately set off for home, he would need to detour through Calhode instead.

While feeling more and more homesick, he arrived at the castle once again.

"Good day"(Kousuke)

"Yo! Accompanying our princess again huh? Make sure you behave yourself!"
(Guard)

After so many visits, it was inevitable to become acquainted with all the guards at the gate.

While waiting for a guide, Kousuke casually chatted with the guards. The same maid arrived and led Kousuke into the castle.

When they reached the music room, he began chatting with the nearby guards until Fleur arrived.

"Good day, Ms. Fleur"(Kousuke)

"Yes, good day to you too"(Fleur)

With the two's constant interaction, some of their formalities were shed. Much of it was thanks to Fleur's friendly disposition.

After a short chat, Kousuke began singing.

Originally, it was just Kousuke singing. However, on the third day, Fleur voiced her desire to sing along songs she enjoyed.

As expected of a diva, her voice was simply on a completely different level.

Along the way, Fleur would also provide some pointers for Kousuke, which helped him improve his singing. At the same time, the title "The Songstress's Disciple" was earned.

His "Dragonslayer" title did assist in the learning process, but he was still miles away from singing like her. It wasn't a question of skills but instead a difference of passion and emotion towards singing. Her natural endowments and true passion towards singing was just something Kousuke and his titles could never substitute.

Nevertheless, the terrifying thing about the new title is that it would eventually make him into a first-rate singer, second only to the princess.

"Today's session was very pleasant once again"(Fleur)

"I'm glad to know it was to your liking.

Ms. Fleur, there is something I need to inform you"(Kousuke)

"And that would be?"(Fleur)

"It's about time I return home. I would like for today to be the last music lesson"(Kousuke)

Fleur's face flashed disappointment for a moment before disappearing.

"I understand. Thank you for everything so far.

Personally, I would like to keep Sir Kousuke here longer, but it cannot be helped since you have your own businesses to go about"(Fleur)

"To be honest, I would like to stay a bit longer, but the sensation of being watched became stronger with each passing day"(Kousuke)

"Oh my, I see you noticed that"(Fleur)

"Well, my intuition has always been strong"(Kousuke)

"My father was supposed to keep it controlled, but an individual personally named by a god is something many's curiosity cannot ignore"(Fleur)

Despite her saying "curiosity", it was clearly not a friendly one.

Greed and arrogance were filled in many of those gazes. If not for the king's intervention, Kousuke would have likely been surrounded by nobles, politicians and other influential individuals with an agenda.

Honestly, these folks should just recall their mistake in trying to use the sea dragon before.

"I only know some unusual songs, so I don't quite understand what they see to gain from me"(Kousuke)

"It may be your other abilities, you know? I heard from Sir Scheidt that you're quite the powerful warrior"(Fleur)

"It is true that I have some capabilities. Still, it's not like I'm the strongest in the world"(Kousuke)

He tried to play it off casually.

"It is true there are others who could venture and return from that mountain.

Well, enough about that, may I know when you will be departing?"(Fleur)

"I was planning on leaving immediately tomorrow morning"(Kousuke)

"Please come visit again if you happen to return. I hope to hear more new songs"(Fleur)

"I cannot say for certain, but if I am around, I'll be sure to visit"(Kousuke)

At the very least, he didn't see himself returning here for at least a year or two. Fleur instinctively understood this as well. She just felt it would be a nice thing if he were to visit again soon. It was also the first time she took a disciple and seeing him leave so quickly was somewhat disheartening.

Fleur removed the brooch she wore and presented it to Kousuke.

"This is the reward for the songs and it should be worth around three gold coins. Please accept it"(Fleur)

The brooch was equivalent in value to the medicinal water request. These few days must have been that important to her to provide such a high reward.

"I thank you for your generosity"(Kousuke)

He carefully picked up the brooch and inspected it closely.

Kousuke was in fact troubled by this notion. Even though she said it's worth three gold coins, just how can he sell something that originally belonged to a royalty! He soon made up his mind, he'll only try to sell it if he's ever in desperate need of funding. He still had enough money so there's no need to sell it right away anyways.

"For you to stare at it so much, is something the matter?"(Fleur)

"Oh, um, I was just wondering how I should store it. Would it be safe to just wrap it with some cloth?"(Kousuke)

"I would guess so. I personally do not have much understanding towards this since such thing was handled by the servants"(Fleur)

"Well, I guess that would be the case"(Kousuke)

Kousuke wrapped the brooch with his handkerchief and stowed it into his

pocket. With everything done, he stood up from his seat.

"It's time I return"(Kousuke)

"I see..... I would like to personally see you out today"(Fleur)

But when her guards heard her, they began shaking their heads.

"I apologize"(Fleur)

"There's no need to apologize.

Oh, one last thing, may I see Scheidt before I leave? I want to let him know as well before I leave"(Kousuke)

"May he?"(Fleur)

Fleur glanced towards her guard with her query. Her guards paused for a moment before one answered.

"He may, as long as one of us is present during their meeting"(Guard)

"It is as he stated, would that still be fine?"(Fleur)

"That's fine, thank you very much"(Kousuke)

The guard that answered the question nodded back at Kousuke.

Saying farewell to Fleur, the guard led Kousuke to the room where Scheidt was staying.

There were two soldiers standing guard by the room door. Upon seeing the two approaching the room, they halted Kousuke's group. The guard that led Kousuke explained the situation and was allowed entry.

Scheidt was fiddling with his backpack when he heard the door open. He immediately stopped his work and turned toward the door.

"Well, speak of the devil"(Scheidt)

"Yo, Scheidt. I came to say hi and goodbye"(Kousuke)

"Goodbye? Ahh, you're heading home then"(Scheidt)

"Mhmm. I finished sightseeing and I finished planning my route"(Kousuke)

"I see, you're going home....."(Scheidt)

Kousuke looked blankly at Scheidt's brooding face.

Scheidt suddenly looked up toward Kousuke and continued.

"I was hoping you can do a small errand for me, can you?"(Scheidt)

"That'll depend on what that errand is, though"(Kousuke)

"Makes sense.

Alright then, first off, I'm a deserter from the Shidalm Kingdom. I'm also being hunted down by my former comrades"(Scheidt)

"..... Huh?"(Kousuke)

Bewildered at the sudden confession, Kousuke couldn't understand for a moment.

"Remember those fellas that attacked us on the mountain? They weren't bandits, but my former comrades that chased me here"(Scheidt)

"..... So my actions of fending them off may have put me on their hit list?"(Kousuke)

"Let's just say that it's a possibility"(Scheidt)

"WHA?!"(Kousuke)

"Now now, as long as you don't go to Shidalm, you'll be fine"(Scheidt)

"Really?"(Kousuke)

"Yea. Going back to the main point, I came here specifically to seek asylum"(Scheidt)

He continued to explain the details of his escape and his reasons for deserting.

Skipping extraneous details and with full honesty, everything was explained in a succinct manner.

"Let's go back to the main topic about the favor I asked about.

I was hoping you could assist me a little with the task the king entrusted to me"(Scheidt)

"Before that, is it even alright for me to assist you with your task?"(Kousuke)

"I wasn't explicitly told I couldn't receive assistance. As long as my methods do not disrupt the peace of this country or endanger their core interests, the king is willing to overlook them"(Scheidt)

"I won't help if it's something against my bottom line, just so you know"
(Kousuke)

"It should be alright.. I think. It's actually simple, I just need you to drop me off somewhere with your flight magic at night. You can head straight for the harbor after dropping me off, too.

I wanted your assistance since I recently remembered you said you could fly.

Even if you didn't visit me today, I would have visited you first thing tomorrow morning"(Scheidt)

"I guess things are in your favor today, Scheidt"(Kousuke)

"So, will you do it?"(Scheidt)

The task seemed a bit shady and Kousuke honestly did not wish to assist in anything that seemed criminally inclined. However, hearing that it was an edict from the king, maybe helping just a little wouldn't be too bad. It was pretty clear that Scheidt wasn't an inherently bad person from their interactions. If his assistance can help such a person to live a peaceful life, he felt that using a little magic wouldn't be too bad.

"If you can promise to not expose anything more about me, then sure. It seems you told the king and his retainers quite a bit"(Kousuke)

"It couldn't be helped since it was specifically demanded by the king. I only gave some superficial details since I honestly don't know how strong you really are.

Never mind, sure, I promise. From this day forth, my lips are sealed"(Scheidt)

As long as Scheidt completes this task, a path to a peaceful life awaits him. He knew that any detail about Kousuke would one day become useful, so he promised for now.

"I just need to drop you off on a roof somewhere, right?"(Kousuke)

"Yup"(Scheidt)

"Got it.

So where exactly is the place?"(Kousuke)

"Zakamedon, a town within Shidalm Kingdom"(Scheidt)

Hearing the destination, Kousuke's eyes narrowed toward Scheidt.

"Didn't you just say it would be dangerous for me to go to Shidalm?"
(Kousuke)

"I'm not asking you to cause a scene there! Remember, I'm a wanted fugitive there as well. I plan on using magic to stay hidden as well since I need to make a few trips to other locations, like the capital"(Scheidt)

"Will it really be alright?"(Kousuke)

"We'll avoid crowded areas and sleep in the wild, it'll be fine. We'll also keep a wide berth from any checkpoints"(Scheidt)

"Aren't those just common sense for anyone infiltrating?"(Kousuke)

Kousuke was a bit curious about what he wanted to do in Zakamedon, but held his mouth since he didn't want to get further involved.

He knew Scheidt wouldn't hide it if he asked. Since the topic was never breached, Scheidt also did not openly explain.

They finalized the plan and will begin the following day. Kousuke said his farewells and left the room.

After enjoying the castle's dinner, Kousuke immediately headed back to the inn for the night. He prepared his belongings and made sure everything was ready to go for checking out.

He felt slightly despondent since all his information gathering became useless due to the change in plan. He slowly fell asleep soon after.

The following morning, Scheidt came to pick up Kousuke during breakfast.

The inn's owner thought Scheidt was finally returning, but was bewildered to see him wanting to check out. Just for what reason did he rent a room here for?

The two immediately left on a carriage and began their travel on foot after reaching the country's border. Since they were planning to avoid people, their

luggage was brimming with a lot of food, but it was still extremely light for Kousuke. It was a bit burdensome for Scheidt, but it became more bearable as they got into the groove of the travel.

To reduce using the preserved goods, they would hunt and gather in the wild from time to time. After 12 days, the two arrived at their destination. It took twice as long as normal due to the many detours they had to take.

"So that's our destination?"(Kousuke)

Within the woods, Kousuke pointed at the faintly discernible silhouette of a town.

"Yes. I have a small business to handle with a noble there"(Scheidt)

"I guess we'll wait here until nightfall, then. You'll be able to point out the exact spot you want me to drop you off, right?"(Kousuke)

"Of course. All you need to do is fly according to my instructions"(Scheidt)

Happy with the answer he got, Kousuke plopped down and began resting.

Scheidt began to prep for his mission. He unloaded his luggage and separated the necessary and unnecessary tools. Pouching everything he needed, he quickly bagged up the rest and settled it atop a tree. He'll pick it up once his mission here is completed.

After some time, they spotted a few people exiting the town and approached near the forest. It seemed that they were unable to see Kousuke and Scheidt.

A few of them looked like adventurers and they immediately left after scouting around the edge of the woods.

Nightfall.

"Is it time to begin?"(Kousuke)

"Everything's ready. Let's go"(Scheidt)

Kousuke lightly voiced the incantation and began to float. He hovered behind Scheidt and wrapped his arms around his torso and took to the sky. After getting enough height to oversee the entire town, Kousuke gently flew towards the town with Scheidt in his arm.

It would have been more ideal to sneak in while it was raining, but it was mostly clear tonight. However, the light breeze felt quick comfortable as they traversed the sky.

"Can you see the drop off point from here?"(Kousuke)

"It's a little difficult with how high up we were, mind going a bit lower for me?"(Scheidt)

"Roger that"(Kousuke)

Following Scheidt's request, Kousuke flew lower until he was told to stop.

"It's that roof. Alright, fly a bit north now"(Scheidt)

"North, got it"(Kousuke)

"Stop. Go east now"(Scheidt)

"Eastward, ho!"(Kousuke)

"Stop. We can go down now. Just drop me off onto the rooftop"(Scheidt)

"Prepare for landing"(Kousuke)

Kousuke enjoyed the situation since it felt like he was the crane from an arcade crane game.

Of course, the two did not lower their vigilance during the descent, carefully observing to confirm they were still hidden.

After dropping Scheidt off onto the roof, Kousuke began to fly away. After taking some distance, Kousuke turned around and saw Scheidt enter the building through a window.

He flew to a tall building nearby, settled on the roof, and continued to observe the situation.

Since he didn't want to leave without knowing the end, he planned to observe until Scheidt safely leaves the town.

10 minutes, 20 minutes, the clock ticked as the night grew darker. However, there was no change in the situation. It clearly showed how well Scheidt was doing with the infiltration.

30 minutes, 40 minutes, finally an hour passed. There was movement near the first floor, a person was leaving from a window.

[That's probably Scheidt... Hmm?](Kousuke)

There were two people leaving the building.

[Is it really Scheidt?](Kousuke)

Kousuke narrowed his eyes further to confirm. Observing their physical features and movements, he confirmed one was Scheidt.

While trying to figure out what was going on, Kousuke began to follow the two. Scheidt didn't seem to notice that Kousuke was following him from above.

The two floated from shadow to shadow, staying completely out of sight.

"What's that.....?"(Kousuke)

There were shadowy figures following the two in a similar fashion. There were 7 in total.

"Pursuers?"(Kousuke)

It seemed Scheidt and his partner didn't notice they were being pursued. Or perhaps he did notice, but isn't showing it to throw them off?

Scheidt and his partner climbed onto a roof and jumped onto the town wall. The two immediately leapt down from the wall and finally exited the town.

The pursuers noticed the two escaping out of town and immediately headed to the nearest gate. After speaking with the gatekeeper, they exited the town through the side entrance and continued their pursuit.

The two groups intersected on the fields between the town and the forest.

Scheidt and his partner's movements were halted, and the pursuers immediately surrounded the two.

At first, it seemed the two groups were negotiating something, but it clearly broke down as both sides unsheathed their weapons.

"Should I help?"(Kousuke)

It was clear which group was disadvantaged here. Kousuke only hesitated for

a split moment before coming to a decision. He would not let his friend die tonight, but at the same time, he did not want to become a wanted man.

He approached slowly from the sky as he began to chant his sleep magic. If everyone falls asleep, there's no way he would be noticed. He can just carry Scheidt and his partner away after this. With this, he can help and stay hidden, truly a perfect plan!

Since he didn't see any other pursuers, he put his entire focus on the 9 below him.

He used two types of magic in this situation. A drowsiness spell, and a sleeping spell. This way, even if the targets below had some resistance, the two-layered spell should work nearly 100% of the time.

The moment the two spells were released, everyone below collapsed to the floor. He observed in silence for a bit, waiting to see if any were faking the sleep.

"Well then, time to get these two to safety"(Kousuke)

He placed Scheidt onto this right shoulder and his partner on his left. It was then he noticed something pressing onto him.

"A woman?"(Kousuke)

He glanced at the partner's side profile and confirmed she really was a woman.

"Would this be considered sexual harassment?"

Ah, whatever, it's not like I can carry her in any other way in this situation.. Let's just pray she'll forgive me"(Kousuke)

While 'enduring' the pressing sensation, Kousuke carried the two towards the forest.

After retrieving the luggage Scheidt hid in the woods, Kousuke immediately flew towards Karbaret. After about an hour of flying, he landed into the forest below him.

He placed the two down gently and began to lightly slap Scheidt awake.

"Ow....."(Scheidt)

"Mornin'. Well, it's technically good evening"(Kousuke)

"..... What is it? Is it time for me to take watch?"(Scheidt)

"Should I slap a little harder?"(Kousuke)

"Slap harder..... AH! Why are you here?! Did we all get caught?"(Scheidt)

"Alright, you really are still half asleep. I'll explain, alright?"(Kousuke)

Seriously, it would be amazing if Scheidt knew exactly what happened.

"After we separated, I was a bit concerned about what was about to happen, so I perched atop a building and observed the situation.

That was when I saw you leave the building with another person. I followed the two of you from above, but that was also when I noticed you were being pursued.

Since you two got surrounded outside the town, I put everyone to sleep and carried the two of you here.

I guess that about sums it up"(Kousuke)

"Thank you for saving us. Of course, thank you for carrying us all the way here as well"(Scheidt)

Scheidt glanced at the still unconscious woman and let loose a sigh of relief.

"You're welcome"(Kousuke)

"But doesn't this mean you'll be marked by those from Shidalm?"(Scheidt)

"I put everyone to sleep for that very reason. How can they see me if they're asleep? Plus, I made sure there weren't any others nearby before I made my move so I should be safe"(Kousuke)

"Well, I guess its fine since you say so"(Scheidt)

Despite their short interaction, he knew that Kousuke was much stronger than he was so if he says he's safe, then he must be safe.

"So, where are we now?"(Scheidt)

"Facing towards Karbaret, around an hour's worth of running distance from

where you surrounded"(Kousuke)

"..... Ah, I see"(Scheidt)

Scheidt quickly mapped out where they were.

"So, in the end, did you succeed in your mission?"(Kousuke)

"Mostly a success. I just need to report back to Karbaret safely"(Scheidt)

Scheidt's mission was to obtain information on the group intending to kidnap Fleur from the ringleader's abode. For Karbaret's side, regardless of the contents, any information pertaining to the plan would be helpful, even if a weakness or flaw could not be exploited.

This mission was given due to the information Scheidt took from his former employer. In terms of information, Karbaret's king had no idea that there was another person or group behind Shidalm that was targeting Fleur.

Since Kousuke had no idea about the details of this mission, his inadvertent intervention would one day give Karbaret a stronger influence without the need to use Fleur for a political marriage. With this, Fleur would have a greater freedom and less worry about her future.

It could also be said that the Sea Dragon's mission to help Fleur was a success. Of course, the very person in question was oblivious to how much he assisted her.

"I feel a bit better hearing that. Alright then, it's time for me to head out"(Kousuke)

"I'm truly indebted to you. Once everything settles down, I'll send you a letter"(Scheidt)

"That might be a bit difficult since I don't live in a town or a city"(Kousuke)

"I'll send it to a guild in a town near your place then. Since you're an adventurer, you'll definitely frequent there"(Scheidt)

"Got it. Well, take care. You take care too, I know you've been awake"(Kousuke)

Kousuke waved goodbye and began flying towards Karbaret.

After seeing Kousuke's figure disappear, both Scheidt and the woman, Maron, stood up. She awoke in the middle of the two's conversation, but pretended to be asleep since she was wary of Kousuke.

After patting off the dirt from her clothes, she turned towards Scheidt. Maron queried about their current situation and about Kousuke. After Scheidt explained, the two immediately headed back to Karbaret.

He knew it would cause a slight uproar bringing Maron with him, but that is a separate tale for these two. It would also be something Kousuke would find out much later in the distant future.

Such as finding out the two were married by the time he met them again.

Chapter 31: The Pursuit for Meat!

Two days have passed since parting with Scheidt. Kousuke stood at the entrance of the harbor city. Asking around, he found out that all ships are currently unavailable and the only time one would set sail is four days later. Having no choice, he decided to continue his sightseeing and find good food. Rather than walking, he flew from place to place every day, enjoying the country's various sights and foods.

On the fourth day, he finally set sail towards Kalhode's south western port and he reached there safely, unlike his previous experience.

Currently, he is looking for ship headed towards Sebushik. He did find one, but things didn't go as smoothly as planned.

"We set sail in ten days"(???)

All ships heading towards Sebushik have already left in the past two days. Anyone headed there would have to wait and it troubled Kousuke since he didn't want to waste any more time. Ten days was simply too long a wait.

"I guess I'll just sightsee some more. It's not like I'm given much choice at this juncture"(Kousuke)

He decided to go sight see some more. With how much money he has, as long as he did not spend extravagantly, he would be fine.

His tongue has been slightly numbed by the constant seafood while on the ship and he began to crave meat so he approached a stall to find out more for a change of pace.

"Delicious meat? Yea, I know of some. The birds in the Sebule forest are delicious, especially when you roast them whole.

The skin has the just right amount of crisp, the breast meat is juicy and just melts in your mouth, and the thighs are soft, supple, and flavorful. Every part of this bird is truly delectable.

If you want some, you can get some in this town. However, if you want the true experience, head to the forest in the north, but I warn you, I wouldn't

recommend this. There's a beastfolks village there where the bird's dish originated from.

They have a stuffing's recipe that's out of this world, and their secret sauce, truly the best. Whatever they're putting in there just makes all our dishes here pale in comparison.

I had it once and I can still remember every detail of it"(Stall owner)

The stall owner's eyes were shining in nostalgia as he explained.

"Why haven't others tried to copy the recipe if it's that good?"(Kousuke)

"We tried, but it doesn't taste as good. All the chefs that tried were baffled by this despite having gathered everything in the recipe.

In the end, they gave up and decided to find their own flavor, unique to this town"(Stall owner)

"I see, I think I'll try some of that bird here if you have"(Kousuke)

"Unfortunately, it's impossible right now"(Stall owner)

"Why?"(Kousuke) **【TL: WHY YOU TEMPT ME WITH DELICIOUS FOOD AND SLAP ME WITH NO!】**

"It's already a week past the usual shipment, but it hasn't arrived to this town yet. Right now, none of the stores have it"(Stall owner)

"Wouldn't this be quickly solved with some hunters?"(Kousuke)

"And trespass a beastfolks's territory?"(Stall owner)

"Are the beastfolks in the forest dangerous?"(Kousuke)

[If that's the case then I might just find something else instead](Kousuke)

"No no, quite the contrary actually. Otherwise, how could we trade for those birds?"(Stall owner)

"Then why hasn't anyone gone yet?"(Kousuke)

"Even if you ask me..."(Stall owner)

The stall owner paused and showed a difficult face, but finally continued.

"Well.. because you know.. they're beastfolks"(Stall owner)

"That doesn't really explain much to me, though"(Kousuke)

"Really? Everyone else here would understand if they heard that"(Stall owner)

It was a commonplace narrow-mindedness that's shared by most inhabitants in this world. Individuals like Kousuke were, in fact, the outlier.

Beastfolks were evolved from beasts. Among the varied tribes, some were evolved from carnivorous beasts, a few of which would prey on humans. However, not all would aggressively hunt humans just to meet their taste. In the end, the few cases of predation combined with the doubtful nature of the humans have forcefully casted a rather negative view of all beastfolks.

In conclusion, the people of this town would refuse to get in contact with the nearby beastfolks village, if allowed.

Speaking of Japan it would be ninjas, geishas, tempura. Americans would have their cowboys and hamburgers and the Indians their curry and yoga. These assumptions are there due to their factual backings, but not all Indians do yoga, and not all Americans eat hamburgers. Being unable to remove such pre-conceived notions from their minds, the humans of this town, despite knowing the nearby beastfolks village are not human eaters, are adamant in their refusal to interact deeply with them.

In truth, all it would take is just one step forward and everything would change. There have been cases where the relationship between a beastfolks village and a human settlement were harmonious.

"Then am I right to assume that if I want to eat some, I would need to head there myself?"(Kousuke)

"I guess so. If you do go, can you let us know what happened when you return?"(Stall owner)

"I'm pretty sure the guild would have a request like that posted"(Kousuke)

"It should be"(Stall owner)

The meat-craving Kousuke decided to head to the forest. It wasn't like he needed money so he didn't bother heading to the guild either.

Kousuke thanked the stall owner for the information and began preparing for

the trip. After buying a few essentials, he immediately left town for the northern forest. According to what he gathered, the distance to the forest was roughly a day on foot.

As his travel distanced himself from the coast, the smell of the sea faded and the thick smell of grass became more prevalent. And soon, he reached the outskirts of the forest.

"Oh, I forgot to ask where the village was.

I wonder if I might find them if I just wander around in the woods"(Kousuke)

Still, even if he asked, it was unlikely the people of the town would have known. Their prejudice gave them a reason to not care where the village was. The only time they were near the forest would be to gather herbs and firewood at the edge of the forest. Not once have they set foot into the woods.

【TL: Honestly, this is very unhuman-like. Where there's resource, people will flock. It doesn't make sense to completely ignore it just to push through a silly prejudice. In fact, invading, usurping, uprooting, etc would have been a more plausible action since it can be justified as "removing danger"】

Kousuke concluded that if searching by foot doesn't work, he can simply fly and observe from above.

The moment Kousuke set foot into the woods, he furrowed his brows.

"This forest is like Mt. Mubrant, it's really quiet"(Kousuke)

The only sound entering his ears at the moment were the rustling of the tree leaves. On rare occasions, he heard a light cry of a bird.

From the information he gathered, there shouldn't be anything dangerous in this forest. However, he felt that those rumors weren't too credible. He hoped nothing dangerous would appear. It was a fact that some beastfolks would come to town to trade so it was most likely safe enough.

"Maybe the delayed shipment has something to do with this silence?"
(Kousuke)

He slowly proceeded deeper, keeping his senses sharp. Eventually, he heard something unusual.

He immediately changed directions and headed towards the source of the sound. Around a minute later, a scream was suddenly heard.

Judging by the sound, it was a child, so Kousuke hurried to the scene with a sprint. While dashing there, he caught with the edge of his sight a large, bright-yellow object. He promptly ignored it for the time being and further raised his speed.

Upon reaching the scene, what greeted him was a three meter long wingless, western dragon chasing and snapping towards an escaping child. **【TL: Oh look.. a dragon 】**

"Like I'll let you!"(Kousuke)

Without stopping the sprint, Kousuke immediately leapt and launched a kick towards the dragon. Like an arrow in flight, he landed his kick right in between the dragon-like creature's collarbone. A prompt snap was heard from the creature's neck and it's life ended.

After confirming its death, he turned his head towards the child that looked around 10 years old. The child had red eyes and a rabbit's face. For a brief moment, Kousuke thought it was a cosplay, but soon realized it was one of the beastfolks living in the forest.

"You alright?"(Kousuke)

Still shaken by what happened, the child barely nodded his head while shivering. Sensing the inner turmoil the child had, Kousuke gently patted the child's head to console him. Kousuke was slightly tickled by the soft sensation.

【TL: NO KOUSUKE, DON'T GO TO THE DARK SIDE!】

In time, the child's shivering stopped so Kousuke continued to talk.

"Are you hurt anywhere?"(Kousuke)

"No, I'm fine-pyo"(Child) **【TL: like -dattebayo in Naruto, being a rabbit person, the child said Daijoubu-pyo, instead of Daijoubu-yo to make him more.. rabbit-like?】**

"Pyo? Ah, come to think of it"(Kousuke)

He recalled when Horun told him beastfolks children have a unique and

peculiar way of ending their sentences sometime. The moment this habit of theirs end is a sign of them entering adulthood. Nodding in understanding, Kousuke continued.

"Do you live in this forest?"(Kousuke)

"Mm"(Child)

"I was actually heading to your village today, but I got a little lost. Can you lead me to your village?"(Kousuke)

The child nodded and stood up, but suddenly fell on his rear-end again.

His legs were too wobbly from the earlier scare.

Kousuke crouched down and lift the child up in his arms.

"Just point the way, I'll carry you"(Kousuke)

The child nodded and pointed towards a direction. Kousuke looked towards the direction before turning around and heading towards the slain monster.

He carefully examined the monster's characteristics. Based off what he knew, it was likely this creature was a Draken.

Drakens were classified as pseudo-dragons. With a closely related name and similar appearance to actual dragons, Drakens are highly territorial and are known for their great strength and stamina. Even if a group of C and B level adventurers organized a party against this monster, they would lose 9 out of 10 times. In truth, Kousuke's kick was a lucky blow since this monster was something that would have given him a hard time in actual combat.

Regardless, the question remained. Why was something like this in this area and how come no one was aware of it?

"Are these... common in this forest?"(Kousuke)

The child immediately shook his head.

"Around 3 weeks ago, a bunch of monsters started coming to this forest-pyo"(Child)

"Started gathering, I see. Does this happen normally? Like a seasonal thing"(Kousuke)

The child, once again, shook his head.

"No, never before. Everyone is wondering why this is happening-pyo"(Child)

"I see.

By the way, with all these monsters flooding into the forest, why did you leave the village?"(Kousuke)

"I was worried about the birds I was taking care of"(Child)

"What if you got hurt? Your parents must be very worried right now, right?"
(Kousuke)

"I'm sorry-pyo"(Child)

"Don't apologize to me, but to everyone that's worried about you"(Kousuke)

After patting the boy's head once more, Kousuke grabbed the tail end of the Draken and began heading towards the direction of the village. After going through the trouble of killing it, leaving it seemed too wasteful. Kousuke didn't immediately process and dismantle the monster here. The blood would attract unwanted attention and he didn't want to endanger the child. He planned to dismantle it once he reached the village, but even if he was refused, at least he got the child to safety and he can do it somewhere else.

"So you really are strong-pyo"(Child)

The child stared at Kousuke's face with bright, shining eyes, to which Kousuke could only feel his embarrassment rising. The child's stare was trying to burn a hole through Kousuke's face.

"What do you mean by that?"(Kousuke)

"You killed a dragon, right?"(Child)

"..... How do you know that?"(Kousuke)

Kousuke's feet stopped and he gave the child a long, hard look.

"I can see titles-pyo"(Child)

"Just like Viare, I see"(Kousuke) **【TL: I actually forgot Viare could see it too 】**

The ability to see others' title is a rare one, but it's not unique to one person.

It didn't surprise Kousuke to find another person just like Viare ever since Erisu told him this.

"Can you keep this a secret from others, for me?"(Kousuke)

"Why-pyo?"(Child)

"I want to keep a low profile. Please?"(Kousuke)

"I don't really understand, but okay!"(Child)

"Thank you"(Kousuke)

Feeling helpless towards people with such a gift, Kousuke continued carrying the child towards the village. On the way, Kousuke heard some noise up ahead.

He assumed it was probably the villagers searching for the boy.

"JERUDE!"(???) **【TL: Jebaited 】**

Among the crowd, one man screamed out the boy's name. The approaching man had a faint smell of medicine on him. It made sense after seeing the bandages wrapped on his arm and neck. In fact, the rest of the group were bandaged in a similar fashion.

It seemed that the boy's name was Jerude. What surprised Kousuke was that the people searching for Jerude were humans, not beastfolks. He guessed that some humans co-habit with the beastfolks. As he observed the group more, he felt that he recognized them a little.

With raised vigilance, he carefully placed Jerude down.

"You really worried us!"(???)

"I'm sorry..."(Jerude)

The man yelled as he firmly grasped Jerude's shoulders, to which Jerude only sulkily apologized.

The others in the group began cheering after finding Jerude was safe.

"Don't do something like this again, even if you were safe in the end"(???)

"We're really glad you weren't hurt"(???)

"The brother there, you kept Jerude safe, right? Wait.. wait.. IS THAT A

DRAKEN?!"(???)

The group were shocked to see the Draken right behind Kousuke.

"It was trying to eat Jerude, so I killed it"(Kousuke)

"My god, you must be really strong to be able to kill something like that!"(???)

Shock, astonishment, fear, the shaky voice reflected many emotions.

"Is something the matter?"(Kousuke)

The man placed Jerude down and looked towards Kousuke.

"Sorry, I was just surprised that you killed a Draken"(???)

"A DRAKEN?! Something like this is also gathering in this forest?! Should we continue with the guild's request? Or should we head back and report this first?"(???)

The man gave a deep bow towards Kousuke.

"Thank you for saving Jerude"(???)

"Please raise your head, there's no need for thanks. A child was about to be eaten, there's no way anyone would ignore this"(Kousuke)

Kousuke really didn't want a reward, he did everything because he wanted to help.

"Still, you did save Jerude in the end. At the very least accept my tha... hm?"(???)

"What's wrong, Egan?"(???)

Seeing Egan suddenly pausing and staring at Kousuke's face, another from the group questioned Egan.

"You look really familiar"(Egan)

Just like Kousuke, Egan had a faint sense of familiarity.

Since both had the same feeling, they began to recall as much as possible since it couldn't be a coincidence.

And Kousuke soon remembered... It was a bit before the 3rd month since arriving to this world.

".... If I remember correctly, you're part of Regulus Parlor, right?"(Kousuke)

"That is our party's name, does this mean we met before?"(Egan)

"Just once. Remember when I was accepting odd-job requests? Your party tried to forcefully make me join you on yours.

You were given a penalty from the guild for that"(Kousuke)

""""""AH! YOU!?"""""

Egan and the rest suddenly remembered after hearing that.

The looks in their eyes became complicated with this.

However, a single, loud sigh cleared up everything. They may have just buried it temporarily, but it wasn't of any concern for Kousuke.

"We apologize for our previous brazen behavior"(Egan)

"An apology, that's a bit unexpected"(Kousuke)

It was Kousuke's turn to be surprised. Recalling how they acted before, seeing them lowering their heads to apologize was truly unlikely.

"Us apologizing is a surprise, I see... Well, it really can't be helped. Especially with how we used to be"(Egan)

"Thinking back, it really made sense why we were so unpopular"(Adventurer)

"What an embarrassing past we had..."(Adventurer2)

When Kousuke saw how much they changed, he guessed whatever they experienced these past few months must have been quite something. Otherwise, a little nudge here and there wouldn't change a person this much.

This change, it seemed it was a good thing for them in the end. Kousuke firmly believes this.

"Well, enough about us. What brings you to this forest?"(Egan)

"I heard the bird dish the beastfolks village makes is absolutely delicious, so I came to try some"(Kousuke)

"Oh that, yup, it's definitely good... But I don't think you'll be able to get some right now"(Egan)

"Because of this monster infestation?"(Kousuke)

"So you heard from Jerude. Exactly.

With everyone in the village scrambling to figure out the reason and to protect each other, I doubt they have the time to cook food for outsiders"
(Egan)

"Makes sense. What to do... I guess I should just head back then"(Kousuke)

He was a little disappointed, but he didn't want to cause the village any trouble with his intrusion. He felt it was only right to head back.

Seeing Kousuke trying to leave, Egan immediately stopped him.

"Wait a moment. I wish to request your aid in resolving this situation. Please, I beg of you"(Egan)

Once again, Egan gave a deep bow. The rest of his party members did the same.

"If it was possible, we would have protected the village ourselves. However, finding out even a monster like a Draken appearing, it's clearly beyond our abilities now.

In order to return the favor they gave us, please help us on this endeavor!"
(Egan)

Egan's words were overflowing with sincerity. It was clear just how much he wanted to protect the people of the village. If left alone, he probably would kowtow/dogeza instead.

Kousuke thought it was likely that the beastfolks villagers attributed to these adventurers' drastic change in personality. In fact, Kousuke was spot on.

The only thing Kousuke overlooked was the regret that mixed in Egan's voice.

Affected by the four's enthusiasm, Kousuke assented. Jerude was even happier knowing that a Dragonslayer would be helping out.

"Alright, I'll help"(Kousuke)

"Excellent! THANK YOU!

The village is this way, please follow us!"(Egan)

With the jovial Egan in the lead, the group soon reached the beastfolks village.

The villagers were in the process of putting up a wooden fence around the village perimeter to deter the monsters.

As for the village itself, it looked like any other village you could find and nothing screamed “beastfolks”. A dirt road, stone and wood buildings, and some farmsteads.

Based on the size of the village, it was clear the population was less than a hundred.

An uproar from the villagers came about the moment they saw Jerude among Kousuke’s group. A few of the villagers shouted at the top of their lung that Jerude has come back.

"Jerude! I’m so glad you’re back safe and sound-nya!"(Nyan-cat) **【TL: 】**

The group was instantly surrounded and a cat-faced woman immediately hugged Jerude as she sobbed. Besides her, the white goat-faced man was smiling gently at the two.

Their unique way of speaking was leaking out due to emotional distress, many, regardless of their age were shouting it without qualm.

"Who are those two?"(Kousuke))

"They’re Jerude’s parents"(Yelutz)

Yelutz, one of Egan’s comrade, answered Kousuke’s question.

"I don’t see this adding up. Isn’t Jerude a rabbit beastfolks?"(Kousuke)

"You don’t know? Beastfolks will very often conceive a child of a different animal type from their own"(Yelutz)

"I see"(Kousuke)

The reason for this was because of their many generations of interspecies marriage.

Most beastfolks have genes of various species within them and the gene they have the most of will usually become the animal type of their children.

Currently, it's incredibly rare to see a couple conceive a child with the same animal type as either of the parents. It's common to see a family of beastfolks that are comprised of all different animal types, with the exception being identical twins.

The generation where the animal type was kept the same as the parents was something far into the past, around the time they were birthed into this world.

"Thank you so much, Sir Egan! There are no words that can express my joy of having Jerude returned to us safely!"(Jerude's father)

Jerude's father shouted as he bowed in deep appreciation. Egan immediately grasped the father's shoulder to stop him.

"Your gratitude needs to go to him, instead. He saved Jerude from a Draken that was chasing him"(Egan)

Egan pointed towards Kousuke.

Kousuke was taken aback by the sudden introduction and was a beat slow in responding with a light bow.

"Thank you very much for saving my son while endangering yourself! I have no idea how I can repay you for your kindness.

I truly cannot fathom the difficulty you must have faced having to deal with a dangerous monster like a Draken. So please, if there is anything I can do for you, do not hesitate to tell me"(Jerude's father)

"No, please, there's no need to go that far. I just got lucky with a surprise attack, that's all"(Kousuke)

"That monster isn't something a simple surprise attack can defeat, correct?"(Jerude's father)

"But it did. It's neck broke from that attack so it never had a chance to fight back"(Kousuke)

"That... I can only presume your luck was truly good then"(Jerude's father)

The assumption the father made about Kousuke was that he was around the same as Egan and his crew. Without knowledge of his absurd titles, the father could only believe that it was just really good luck Kousuke had. However, that

in turn made his respect towards Kousuke soar even further for he fought to save his son's life despite knowing how dangerous it could have turned out. This showed just how dangerous Drakens were to everyone.

"Yes, I was just lucky. So please, there's no need to give me anything, your thanks are enough"(Kousuke)

"I cannot accept that! You have saved my son's life, I will not be satisfied with just giving thanks"(Jerude's father)

"But I'm more than satisfied with just the reward I can get for dismantling and selling this Draken. There's really no need"(Kousuke)

"But!"(Jerude's father)

The father became agitated, but was stopped.

It was Egan who intervened.

"Then let's do this, feed him the roasted bird dish. In the first place, this fella came to this woods just for that"(Egan)

"Is that true?"(Jerude's father)

"Mm. I was looking forward to eating it"(Kousuke)

"Perfect! I'll gather everyone to make you the best roast ever!"(Jerude's father)

"Then.. I'll be waiting in anticipation"(Kousuke)

Kousuke's smile looked slightly troubled, but he was happy nonetheless.

"We'll go for another round of patrol then"(Egan)

Seeing everything was settled, Egan and his crew left for the woods once more.

"Wait! You're all still injured and this constant patrolling everyday has left you all battered. For today, please just rest!

Leave the patrol to the rest of us"(Jerude's father)

"You lot don't know what it's like to fight monsters. Do you think we'll agree to something that dangerous?"(Egan)

"Even so, we are experienced hunters. We are confident in being able to escape at the first sign of danger"(Jerude's father)

"There are some monsters that excel in stalking and some are too fast to escape from. No means no, we will not let you guys go out"(Egan)

"The monster infestation is a problem of this village. You cannot expect us, the victims, to sit back and expect outsiders to shoulder all the burden"
(Jerude's father)

From the villagers' perspective, they wish to patrol together with Egan and his crew, rather than having them take the full burden.

However, Igan and his party did not want the villagers in any danger at all. Whatever the case, the underlying reasons for both sides were definitely not simple.

"We wish to do this. Stop babbling and stay put"(Egan)

Nevertheless, the father continued to argue. Seeing no end to this, Kousuke spoke.

"Why not take a small break instead. I'm able to treat wounds so leave it to me. How about it?"(Kousuke)

"You can treat us? Then if you would, please do!"(Egan)

Egan and his party were ecstatic since they lacked a healer at the moment.

This village has a doctor as well, but the doctor specialized more towards treating illnesses and only has very simple healing magic for wounds. For this reason, Igan and his party would continue their patrol despite only receiving nominal treatment. Their use of analgesics is the only reason why they aren't collapsing. Their current condition would normally keep an adult bedridden for weeks.

"I would like to treat them somewhere indoors, would it be possible to borrow a room for that?"(Kousuke)

"Then please follow me to our home"(Jerude's father)

Kousuke nodded in agreement towards the father's suggestion.

The rest of the villagers heaved a sigh of relief seeing this. Egan and his party will be treated and Jerude returned safely, they happily returned to their tasks.

With Jerude's father taking the lead, the group soon reached a house. They settled into the living room and the treatment began.

Kousuke inspected each of them one at a time, asking them to remove their armor and shirts.

"You guys really pushed yourselves. I can't treat wounds with medicine, so I'll be treating you all using magic, alright?"

Egan, your right shoulder has a fracture and the laceration on your left arm is pretty serious, I'll start with those two"(Kousuke)

"Is it treatable?"(Egan)

"Don't worry. I've treated even worse wounds before"(Kousuke)

They were the adventurers that were nearly killed by a Violent Barb. The wounds they were afflicted with could only be explained as heinous.

Kousuke placed his hands onto Egan's wounds. Closing his eyes, Kousuke's hands began to pulse a gentle light.

"How is it? The pain should be mostly gone by now"(Kousuke)

Kousuke pulled his hands away and watched as Egan began stretching his shoulder and arm. The untreated bruises on the other part of his body was still stinging, but the pain from his most serious wounds completely vanished.

"It doesn't hurt, it's completely healed! I feel like I can fight for days now!"(Egan)

"The wounds are healed, but any blood you lost and the built up fatigue your body is enduring can't be, so don't push yourself"(Kousuke)

"It's more than enough now that my wounds are healed"(Egan)

"Stop, you know that's not true"(Kousuke)

Kousuke forcefully made Egan sit and rest before heading to treat another.

The rest of the group were in a similar condition to Egan. Bandaged cuts, large bruises, fractured or broken bones, it was a wonder how they were still

standing. Knowing how stubborn these fellows were, Kousuke put them to sleep with magic after he was done treating them. As if their fatigue has peaked, Egan and his party passed out.

Jerude looked at everyone's worn out appearance worriedly.

"What did you do to everyone-pyo?"(Jerude)

"I forcefully put them to sleep since they'll just drag their worn out bodies without thinking if I leave them alone"(Kousuke)

Kousuke turned towards the father and asked where Egan and the rest normally stayed.

Since this village had no inn, Egan and his party stayed in an unoccupied barn. Kousuke began to carry them over so they could finally get some much needed rest.

After having everyone laid onto a bed, Kousuke began to head out to the woods. Realizing that Kousuke was going to go in Egan's stead, the father spoke.

"Where are you going?"(Jerude's father)

"Just going to patrol a little. I promised Egan that I'll protect this village too"(Kousuke)

"I'll come too"(Jerude's father)

"I was planning on dismantling the Draken along the way. It'll probably attract monsters so it'll be quite dangerous.

If possible, can you look after these guys instead?"(Kousuke)

"But..."(Jerude's father)

Hearing that he might encounter monsters directly, the father's foot stopped. Fear, not cowardice. The native monsters of this forest are relatively weak, but the invading monsters are on a completely different caliber. For this village, its inhabitants never had the need to fight before. Hence, the inhabitants were forced to deal with a string of defeats from these monsters. Luckily, thanks to Egan and the raised defenses, none have yet to die.

"It won't take too long, I promise"(Kousuke)

"..... Then I'll leave it to you"(Jerude's father)

Feeling weak and helpless, the father lowered head and his fisted hands were trembling.

Right before Kousuke turned around to leave, the father spoke once more.

"If you see a yellow monkey, please try to catch it instead"(Jerude's father)

"A yellow monkey?"(Kousuke)

Hearing that, Kousuke recalled seeing something similar while heading to rescue Jerude.

"Yes. It seemed Egan and his party were in search of it"(Jerude's father)

"Does it have anything to do with the current situation?"(Kousuke)

"It's possible"(Jerude's father)

The father only heard a little by accident from Egan, so he couldn't say for certain. Still, with how serious Egan was discussing it, it must definitely have a connection with why monsters are invading this forest.

Nodding in agreement, Kousuke turned around and headed out to the forest while dragging the Draken's corpse. He headed towards where he originally saved Jerude.

Around fifteen minutes away from that spot, Kousuke reached a river. There, he began to dismantle the Draken's corpse. Fortunately or not, the entire body could be considered a treasure. From the most to least precious: Horn, claws, fangs, bones, and its hide. Despite the organs and its brain not being classified, they are still valuable for those researching for the parts' potential uses. Some chefs would also be highly interested in the Draken's meat, so that was also a pretty penny that can be earned by selling. If the gamey smell is removed, its taste and texture is said to be comparable to the highest class beef.

"I'll give the meat to the village"(Kousuke)

With the earnings he will gain from the everything else, gifting the meat and burying the innards and brain made sense.

He began to wash off the excess blood from the dismantled parts and his knife. He wrapped up the precious parts and hung them on top of a tree. He kept the meat wrapped up with him since he didn't want wild beasts to take it away. It was still leaking a little blood, but it'll be completely drained as he walks.

With everything handled here, he began his return back to the previous spot. The blood attracted a few animals along the way, but they were easily killed. He couldn't be bothered with dismantling those, so he left them alone.

"It's gone. Well, it's expected"(Kousuke)

Standing where he originally found the yellow object, Kousuke began to scan the surrounding. It's a living creature he was chasing, so it moving from place to place was expected.

"I wonder if it left any trails"(Kousuke)

Despite his scans, the most he found were some of its fur.

He saw some animal prints, but without know the exact shape of this yellow monkey's feet, they were pretty much useless.

With no lead to go with, Kousuke began to patrol in a circle with the village as the center.

Around twenty minutes later. Amidst the numerous leaves, he spotted something yellow. Kousuke paused for a moment to confirm what he saw wasn't a mistake. With steady footsteps, he slowly approached the entity and confirmed that it was the yellow monkey.

The monkey did not notice Kousuke's presence and was grooming itself on a tree branch.

[I have to capture it right? I hope it doesn't notice me closing in. Oh wait, I can just put it to sleep with magic](Kousuke)

While hiding behind a tree, he began the incantation softly.

The monkey began to sway and slumped onto the trunk of the tree.

"It looks like it worked"(Kousuke)

Kousuke approached the tree the monkey was on quickly. Hopping up to the branch, he easily captured the sleeping monkey.

"What is this smell?"(Kousuke)

Kousuke furrowed his brow as he caught an unusual scent. It was neither good or bad, just very peculiar. He guessed it was just this monkey's unique smell and continued to walk with the monkey in tow.

Feeling a little happy with how easy this way, he began to travel back to the village. Draken meat in one hand and a monkey in the other. With a full hand, he decided he'll pick up the rest of the stuff later.

"Damnit, leave me alone!"(Kousuke)

Not even ten minutes later, Kousuke was already assaulted by numerous monsters. He just kicked to death an orc right now. Just before, he kicked away a one-horned ogre. Despite only being able to kick, everything was handle with a single kick so far. Without rest, he was continuously assaulted by one monster after another.

He couldn't understand why this was happening now when it was significantly quieter before. He suspected that this forest had a lot more monster then he originally guessed. He paused for a moment and glanced at the monkey.

"It must be this fella's fault"(Kousuke)

The constant attacks only happened after he captured this monkey. He knew how well he could conceal himself, so it was obviously not a coincidence that something else was causing this.

"So that smell before was a pheromone that attracts monsters"(Kousuke)

These monsters must have invaded when this monkey came to this forest. With such evidence at hand, this was the only likely conclusion.

There was something that didn't make sense to him though. When the monkey was grooming itself, there were no monsters around. If it was releasing its pheromone at that time, why was nothing chasing it?

"Wait a second... I remember I didn't smell anything while it was grooming itself"(Kousuke)

Kousuke fervently tried to recall the moment before he put the monkey to sleep. And he was 100% sure, it didn't smell while it was grooming itself.

"Maybe it can control when to emit it? That doesn't make sense since it's asleep right now and it's rampantly spreading out. Does this mean it only emits this pheromone when it's asleep? What the heck..."(Kousuke)

This behavior seemed completely contradictory in Kousuke's mind. If it attracted these monsters while it was asleep, isn't it just asking to be killed?

He couldn't make sense of any of this anymore. Kousuke shook his head in denial, he didn't believe that this was the actual truth.

"Alright, no point overthinking it. What should I do now... I can't bring this thing back with me to the village"(Kousuke)

Not willing to expose the village to any danger, returning there for the meantime was postponed. The alternative to continue getting assaulted by monsters was also rejected.

For a brief moment, he was tempted to kill it so it would stop attracting monsters, but he remembered the father's request.

"Ah"(Kousuke)

He felt stupid for worry so much about this, the answer was really simple.

"I just need to wake this monkey up. If my weird guess from before is actually right, it should stop attracting monsters when it's awake.

Bringing the monkey to the village when it's awake would be safe and I'll be able to figure out what to do with it"(Kousuke)

He put down the Draken meat.

Kousuke frowned slightly since this monkey wouldn't wake up even from all that fighting earlier. He began to cast a spell and a giant ball of cold water appeared above the monkey's head. With a splash, the monkey's eyes snapped open and began to screech in shock.

"The smell should be disappearing soon"(Kousuke)

Ignoring the monkey's struggle in his arm, he picked back up the meat and

continued back to the village.

The smell was completely gone around five minutes later and no more monsters were assaulting him.

Feeling happy with this success, Kousuke increased his pace slightly.

Upon returning, Kousuke immediately headed to Jerude's home. He asked the mother if there was a cage to keep the monkey in for the mean time. The monkey seemed to have calmed down, or it was simply too tired to struggle at this point.

She said there was none at home, but the village storehouse would have one. Kousuke left the Draken meat to her and headed to the storehouse with Jerude.

"It's in here-pyo"(Jerude)

In front of the two was the largest building in the village. Around the entrance were some rusted tools piled up on a pull-cart.

"We can just go in?"(Kousuke)

"Mm"(Jerude)

It didn't even take the two five minutes to find the cage.

It was a sturdy, wooden cage and based off what Kousuke felt from the monkey's earlier struggle, it didn't have the strength to break free from it.

Stuffing the monkey in the cage, he brought it over to where Egan and the rest were staying. He peeked inside and noticed they were all still asleep.

"What are you doing afterwards-pyo?"(Jerude)

"I left some things behind in the woods so I'm heading to grab them now. I'll probably get some rest at an inn after that"(Kousuke)

"There's no inn here-pyo"(Jerude)

"Oh, I forgot. But I can borrow a vacant house right? I'll rely on you to lead me to one later, okay?"(Kousuke)

"I don't think there are any more vacant places-pyo"(Jerude)

"Really? Well, this is a little troubling"(Kousuke)

"Then.. then stay at my place. We have plenty of room-pyo!"(Jerude)

"No, I don't want to cause any troubles"(Kousuke)

"Mom and dad won't say no-pyo!"(Jerude)

Before he could answer, Jerude grabbed and dragged Kousuke back to the house.

It was just when the mother returned from her errands. Jerude explained to his mother what was happening. The mother didn't disagree with the request. With no displeasure on her face, she told Kousuke he could stay as long as he wanted. It was a little worrying to Kousuke since she didn't hesitate at all to give her approval. In the end, he could only accept so he gave her his thanks. The mother's face brightened and announced she'll set up a feast for tonight for everyone, Kousuke and Egan's group included.

When Kousuke returned back from the woods with the goods, Jerude's father was already home. He already agreed to letting Kousuke stay for the night.

Jerude clung onto Kousuke for stories outside of the forest. He began to tell where he's gone, people he met, and the food he ate.

While the two were engrossed in their conversation, Jerude's father returned with Egan and his party.

At that moment, a rich aroma was filling the entire home.

"Feel rested?"(Kousuke)

"YOU!"(Egan)

Egan and his party ran up to Kousuke. Kousuke grabbed and lowered their point hands and Jerude's father tried to stop them as well.

"There's no time for us to be resting!"(Egan)

"As your attending doctor, I cannot ignore the fatigue you all have built up. You would have all just gotten injured again, or possibly die"(Kousuke)

"That's right, Sir Egan. We knew just how worn out you all were and if you were to have continued to force yourselves, you would have definitely collapsed"(Jerude's father)

"I went out to patrol instead and even got the monkey, everything's fine.

That monkey's the cause of all these monsters appearing, right?"(Kousuke)

Egan nodded in agreement.

"Dinner's ready, everyone"(Jerude's mother)

The mother entered the room with a huge tray filled with dishes. With her entrance, the situation diffused and everyone gave their thanks for the food.

"Oh stop it you guys. This is my only way of thanking you all for saving my little boy, don't be so serious"(Jerude's mother)

The mother quipped as she organized the table.

The dinner was a cream stew filled with venison and vegetable, freshly gathered wild plant salad, and freshly baked bread. With their current monster crisis, this meal was truly a feast.

Egan and his party ate while feeling both ashamed and thankful.